

COWPER'S
POETICAL WORKS



COWPER'S SUMMER HOUSE AT OLNEY

THOMAS NELSON & SONS,
LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW



THE
POETICAL WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.,
OF THE INNER TEMPLE.

With a Biographical and Critical Introduction

BY

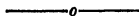
THE REV. THOMAS DALE, M.A.,
CANON OF ST. PAUL'S.



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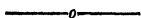
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LIFE OF WILLIAM COWPER.



AMONG the alterations and improvements (for they are not always convertible terms) which the last century has introduced into our literature, one of the most decided alterations, and one of the greatest improvements also, has been made in the department of biography. That which was formerly little more than a barren chronological narrative of facts, has now become a development and a history of mind. The subject of the memoir is permitted to tell his own tale ; and where the documents from which he tells it are the effusions of genuine, spontaneous, unpremeditated feeling, without the adulteration either of affectation or of artifice, it is sure to be truly, and almost sure to be pleasingly, told. This remark does not apply, indeed, to the correspondence of Pope, and perhaps of Swift ; because it is quite clear that the idea of publication was always present to the mind of the former, and that he was continually labouring to enlighten posterity as to that which now constitutes the least of his titles to our regard—his intimacy with the great. Swift, with equal, though perhaps more excusable vanity, desired to leave a permanent record of that strange mixture of superciliousness and servility, with which he demeaned himself towards the men in office, who were at once his patrons and his tools. But it *does* apply, and with peculiar force, to the correspondence of Cowper, who did not make his first appearance as an author till he was nearly fifty years of age, and met with no excess of encouragement or approval even then ;—who did not anticipate, therefore, and, alas ! scarcely lived to apprehend, even the qualified measure of popular applause which he received during his life—whose state of mind was such as to make him almost, if not altogether, indifferent to posthumous reputation—

and whose style and manner of writing preserved their consistency even to the last,—thus proving that the change in his position towards the world had wrought none in his modes of thinking and feeling towards his friends. But for the reputation of his Poems, we should never have known the value of his Letters, which exhibit at least equal powers of mind, and are specimens of at least equal excellency in their line—which, for ease, elegance, liveliness, and that sweet and touching simplicity which is, “when unadorned, adorned the most,” are almost unrivalled, and certainly unexcelled, by any similar collection in the English language, though this department of writing has been cultivated in our own times with signal ability and success.

Now, in what we term the history of mind, the biography of the inward man, it must be evident that not only whatever is told incidentally derives, from that very circumstance, a double charm, but that the interest of the narrative will be enhanced by the fluctuations of the mind itself. The more diversified are the states of feeling through which it passes, the more powerful and extensive will be its influence upon the sympathies of those who study its inward workings through the medium of its external developments. Calmness and equanimity, however desirable for the individual, admit into the records of ordinary life little that is instructive, and less that is interesting; and while it would have been much more favourable to Cowper's worldly happiness to have been what his modes of feeling and habits of life would have made him, in the absence of any powerfully disturbing influence, an ISAAC WALTON or a GILBERT WHITE, it is to the very perversion or aberration of mind, which mingled like poison in his cup of life, chilling all that is genial, and overclouding all that is bright, that posterity is indebted for lessons of the purest morality, conveyed, not only in the form of manly, nervous, animated, and often majestic verse, but in a garb attractive even to those who have no sympathy with the concord of sweet sounds—no music in the soul. Cowper's correspondence was, in the earlier, what his poetry became more especially in the later, years of his life—the relief and refuge of a mind that must otherwise have preyed upon itself, and perished, so to speak, in the flames of its own intelligence. We purpose, therefore, in executing the task which has been assigned to us, of adding one more to the notices of this great poet and good man, to whom the worthiest of his successors in the walk of Christian poetry have combined to do honour, to attempt the illustration of his personal and literary history through the medium of his own correspondence. Presumptuous, indeed, would it be, did we attempt to occupy the

ground which has been trodden before us by the ablest of biographers, SOUTHEY; and one of the most candid of critics, as well as the most Christian of poets, MONTGOMERY.

The family of Cowper was distinguished, in the last century, by producing two brothers, who both obtained seats in the House of Peers by their eminence in the profession of the law. The chief distinction of the family, in this and through all succeeding centuries, will be to have numbered among its members WILLIAM COWPER, the subject of the present essay; though he was only the son of a country clergyman, and incompetent, in the judgment of his contemporaries, to follow the profession that had established the fortunes of his house. William Cowper was born at Berkhamstead, of which parish his father was rector, on the 26th of November 1731; and in 1737, when only six years old, he experienced the first sorrow, which seems to have imparted a dark tinge of colouring to the whole of his subsequent life. His mother, who was peculiarly qualified to watch, as only mothers can, over the developments of a delicate frame, and sensitive mind, like Cowper's, died in childbed, at the early age of thirty-four. The exquisite lines which he wrote "on receiving her picture out of Norfolk," after an interval of fifty years, sufficiently indicate how lively was his recollection of maternal kindness—how different from the ordinary tears of childhood, "forgot as soon as shed," his sorrow for her loss:—

"The record fair,
That memory keeps of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm, that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestowed
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed:
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and breaks
That humour, interposed, too often makes;
All this still legible in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age."

Nor let it be imagined that this was the language of poetic fiction, or exaggeration. In a letter of condolence to his friend, Joseph Hill, Esq., dated Olney, November 1784, he thus expresses his remembrance of this calamity, in language equally touching, and never intended to meet any eye but that of the friend to whom it was written:—

"To condole with you on the death of a mother aged eighty-seven, would be absurd; rather, therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable and so near a relation so long. Your mother lived to see you well, at least to see you comfortably established in the world; mine, dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember with pleasure, while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long; and I, while I live, must regret a comfort of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say that not a week passes (perhaps I might, with equal veracity, say a day) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal; and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered, had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn that she was hidden in the grave so soon."

Nor had any diminution taken place in the freshness and fullness of his filial reminiscences when he received his mother's picture six years after this date. He thus writes, in 1790, to his cousin, Mrs. Bodham, who had sent it to him out of Norfolk:—

"The whole world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture you so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt had the dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object which I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I had completed my sixth year; yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tenderesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper; and though I love all of both races, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me inherently to your side."

When the mother of a young family is prematurely removed, we are apt to draw consolation from the circumstance, that the children who survive her are only, or chiefly, of the other sex; on the principle, that nothing can supply to the youthful female the absence of a mother's tenderness and care. It is possible, however—and this is a case in point—that the bereavement may

be attended with even more disastrous consequences to the motherless boy, when there are peculiarities in his temperament with which the mother alone could sympathize—frailties and infirmities which he could acknowledge to none but her; for to her alone could the acknowledgment be made without humiliation, since by her alone it would be received without reproach. A tender and sympathizing mother—combining gentleness with judgment, and knowing when to apply the timely stimulant, as well as when to pour in the soothing balm—may, under particular circumstances, do more to strengthen and impart a manly tone to the mind and character, than a Spartan or a Roman matron, with her unnatural and impassive heroism, which, after all, is nothing better than “pride, rank pride, and haughtiness of soul;” and a woman of sense, discernment, and gentleness, such as Mrs. Cowper is recorded to have been, possessing the unlimited confidence of her son, might have gently lopped away, one by one, those offshoots of a morbid and sensitive organization, which, in the absence of such maternal vigilance, grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, till they affected the vitality of the parent tree. That in her he had lost the only human being towards whom he could feel confidence, and who could feel sympathy with him, is manifest from the following lines:—

“My Mother! when I learned that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o’er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life’s journey just begun?”

“Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
I learned at last submission to my lot;
But, though I less deplored thee, ne’er forgot.”

Of Cowper’s father we know or hear comparatively little. It is no reflection upon his memory, however, that being occupied with the charge of a parish, inconsiderable neither in extent nor in population, he could not supply to his motherless infants the place of the wife whom he had lost. He probably did the best his circumstances allowed, in placing his elder boy at a boarding school, not being aware how little his son William’s gentle spirit was fitted to encounter the asperities inseparable from the best institutions of this class, where the number of boys is considerable. The academy of his choice, however, was far from being one of the best. Moral discipline was there but little regarded; and “here,” said Cowper, “I had hardships of various kinds to compete with, which I felt more sensibly, in proportion to the tenderness with which I had been treated at home. But my

chief affliction consisted in being singled out from all the other boys, by a lad of about fifteen years of age, as a proper object on whom he might let loose the cruelty of his temper. I choose to conceal a particular recital of the many acts of barbarity with which he made it his business continually to persecute me. . . . The cruelty of this boy, which he had long practised in so secret a manner that no creature suspected it, was at length discovered : he was expelled the school, and I was taken from it.”

It is far from improbable that, in the very recital which Cowper “chooses to conceal,” we should be able to trace, had he uttered them, the seeds of his subsequent mental disorganization and derangement. This is sadly confirmed by the internal evidence of his “*Tirocinium*; or, a *Review of Schools*,”—a poem which combines all the bitterness of satire with all the earnestness of truth, and which it is impossible to read without the conviction that the author was not only describing the recollections, but recalling the feelings of his own earlier years. We read, in the language of the man, those thoughts and emotions which struggled within the bosom of the child, and explain but too clearly why the surviving parent could never supply to the shy and sensitive boy the place of the mother whom he had lost :—

“ Why resign into a stranger’s hand
A task as much within your own command?
Why hire a lodging in a house unknown
For one whose tenderest thoughts all hover round your own?
This second weaning, needless as it is,
How does it lacerate both your heart and his !
The indented stick, that loses day by day
Notch after notch, till all are smoothed away,
Bears witness, long ere his dismissal come,
With what intense desire he wants his home.
But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof
Bid fair enough to answer in the proof,
Harmless, and safe, and natural as they are,
A disappointment waits him even there.
Arrived, he feels an unexpected change,
He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange ;
No longer takes, as once, with fearless ease,
His favourite stand between his father’s knees ;
But seeks the corner of some distant seat,
And eyes the door, and watches a retreat,
And, least familiar where he should be most,
Feels all his happiest privileges lost.
Alas, poor boy !—the natural effect
Of love by absence chilled into respect.
Say, what accomplishments, at school acquired,
Brings he, to sweeten fruits so undesired ?
Thou well deservest an alienated son,
Unless thy conscious heart acknowledge—none ;

None that, in thy domestic snug recess,
He had not made his own with more address,
Though some, perhaps, that shock thy feeling mind,
And better never learned, or left behind.
Add too, that thus estranged, thou canst obtain
By no kind arts his confidence again."

Our impression is, then, without further attempting to penetrate a mystery which is, happily, impenetrable, that if this confidence had never been lost, or could ever have been regained, much of the misery, which overclouded the dark days of Cowper's pilgrimage through this vale of tears, would have been averted, and that he might have become as much the ornament of his family in his own as he will now be in all future generations. This first trial had developed alike the strength and the weakness of his character—had brought into action those feelings and sensibilities which were to be at once the bane and antidote of his mind in later years. "One day," he relates, "as I was sitting alone on a bench in the school, melancholy, and almost ready to weep at the recollection of what I had already suffered, and expecting, at the same time, my tormentor every moment, these words of the Psalmist came into my head, 'I will not be afraid of what man can do unto me.' I applied them to my own case, with a degree of trust and confidence in God that would have been no disgrace to a much more experienced Christian. Happy had it been for me, if this early effort towards dependence on the blessed God had been frequently repeated. But, alas! it was the first and the last between infancy and manhood." Now, it is probable that the persecutions to which Cowper was exposed would have been spontaneously confided by him to a mother's ear; it is certain that they would have been elicited from him by the inquiries of a mother's quick-sighted solicitude: and thus the effort which he had made to resist and to overcome them, of a character in itself the most effectual, and, to a religious parent, the most gratifying, would have met with such sympathy as to encourage, if not insure, its repetition. But religious impressions, in the mind of a bashful boy, do not easily find utterance; while yet the fact of their existence quickens the susceptibility of conscience, and constrains the unhappy youth to feel as though he were the partaker of those vices of which he is, at least originally, the victim. It is too often the mistaken policy of fathers to discourage, rather than to invite, communications of this character: they look upon the school as the arena in which the youth is to be trained for the performance of his future part in life; and assume that, of this training, oppression, under one or other of its many hideous and hateful modifications, must be

an inseparable part. They do not consider that injury, done to the morals of childhood, is like poison cast into a stream at its source; it may tinge and infect the whole course of life, till it mingles with the ocean of eternity. Such, to our apprehension, was the case of Cowper; and certainly the language of his poem affords but too much reason to believe that such was his own impression. What other inference can be drawn from the thrilling earnestness of his remonstrance with the parent who, by sending his son early to school, with a view to the attainment of literary distinction alone, would merge the discipline of the morals in the cultivation of the mind?

“Canst thou, the tear just trembling on thy lids,
And while the dreadful risk, foreseen, forbids—
Free too, and under no constraining force,
Unless the sway of custom warp thy course—
Lay such a stake upon the losing side,
Merely to gratify so blind a guide?
Thou canst not! Nature, pulling at thine heart,
Condemns the unfatherly, the imprudent part.
Thou wouldst not, deaf to Nature’s tenderest plea,
Turn him adrift upon a rolling sea,
Nor say, *Go thither*, conscious that there lay
A brood of asps, or quicksands, in his way;
Then, only governed by the self-same rule
Of natural pity, send him not to school.”

We do not, in making this quotation, profess either to adopt for ourselves, or to recommend to others, the opinions which it expresses, on a subject concerning which there has been nearly the maximum of discussion, and certainly the minimum of determination. We have no other object than to prove, by the record of Cowper’s own experience, that the course which it describes was attended with consequences peculiarly infelicitous to himself, feeding and cherishing every predisposition in his mind to a melancholy and morbid frame, and reducing to complete inaction what might have been the counteracting influences—filial confidence on the one side, and parental sympathy on the other. From Dr. Pitman’s academy, Cowper, after spending two years, some biographers say, under the care of a female oculist—though Dr. Southey represents the husband and wife as practitioners of equal eminence—was placed at Westminster School, where he became, according to his own account, an “adept in the infernal art of lying;” which, Dr. Southey says, and we should be happy if we could agree with him, “is not one of those vices which are either acquired or fostered at public schools.” At all events, it is clear that Cowper learned at

Westminster something more, and something better ; for, in his own account, which exaggerates nothing but his defects, he admits that he was tolerably well furnished with grammatical knowledge. He was then articled for three years to a solicitor, in whose office he met with no less a personage than the future Lord Chancellor Thurlow, in the character of his fellow-clerk. Between the two there was as little similarity of disposition as could be well conceived ; but there was a great similarity of pursuit. "We were constantly employed," says Cowper, "from morning till night, in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law." He looked, however, to the highest honours of the profession, for he had been entered at the Middle Temple before he left school ; and when his term with the solicitor was complete, took chambers there, in 1752, where he remained twelve years, paying little attention to his professional studies, but almost entirely devoted to literary pursuits. And here, in his solitude, those impressions returned upon him, which, with the single exception of the brief interval during which he was being prepared for confirmation, while at Westminster School, had lain dormant since he first, in his childhood, felt the need of a comforter, and first sought, where none can continue to seek in vain. "I was struck," he says, "with such a dejection of spirits as none but they who have felt the same can have the least conception of." In this state he met with "*Herbert's Poems*,"—one of the sweetest and most soothing of mental medicines—which alleviated, if it did not eradicate, the malady, and exerted a salutary influence in preparing his mind for better things. At length he betook himself to God in prayer, and found relief. He was too soon led, however, to ascribe this happy change to the influence of external circumstances, and burned the prayers which he had been accustomed to use, as though they were the memorials, and had not been the medicaments, of his mental and spiritual disease. "It happened to him for a time," he says, "according to the old proverb ;"—but would it have happened thus, could he have poured the secrets of his soul into the sympathizing ear of an anxious and tender parent—a mother, who would have soothed the bitterness of his repentance, by whispering with persuasive voice the promises of the gospel, and confirmed his better resolutions by encouraging the hope on which they must be based ?—would it have happened thus, had there not existed, between the father and the son, that degree of practical estrangement which would lead the latter to suppress the communication of his sorrows, because he could not bring himself to utter the acknowledgment of their cause ?

In June 1754 Cowper was called to the bar, for which, depending on his patrimonial resources, he had taken little pains to qualify himself; and, in 1758, the scantiness of those resources was made manifest by the death of his father. Little as Cowper has recorded of his feelings toward this sole surviving parent, who had placed another in the "domestic sovereignty" which had once been occupied by the mother whom he so fondly loved, it seems that a not unfrequent intercourse was kept up between them, and that he regarded his step-mother with no unfriendly sentiment. Still there is not the slightest reason to suppose that the confidence, once lost, was ever regained by acts of kindness, or that, in his hours of depression, he ever looked for consolation and counsel to a father upon earth. Even in the expression of his regret at the necessary severance of home relations, consequent on his father's death, it is doubtful whether the distant, yet not less vivid, remembrance of the other parent does not predominate. "I was sent for to London, to attend him in his last illness, and he died just before I arrived. Then, and not till then, I felt, for the first time, that I and my native place were disunited for ever. I sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which I once thought I should never be parted; and was at no time so sensible of their beauties as just when I left them all behind me, to return no more."

There was yet, however, to a mind constituted like Cowper's—a mind that yearned after implicit confidence and perfect sympathy—a mind that could only develop its secret struggles and infirmities, as the issue of future years too plainly showed, to one who loved him for himself, and who was all his own—there was yet, in the maturity of life, a prospect of attaining that blessing, the withdrawal of which had darkened the morning of his days: "A man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife;" and it might not, even yet, have been too late for one who had loved Cowper, as such a man in such a relation must be loved, to have acquired over his heart the same influence which the harp of David exercised over the mind of Saul—to have averted the melancholy mood altogether, or alleviated its pressure when it came. The three most endearing and influential relations of woman in life are those of the MOTHER, the WIFE, and the FRIEND. What the first might have accomplished for Cowper, in childhood and in youth, can only be inferred from the disastrous consequences of her loss; nor was the experiment to be tried, how far the void thus made could be filled up, in after-years, by the second; not, however, for want of an object or of one by whom it might have been tried with the fairest

prospect of success. "Cowper had fixed his affections," says Dr. Southey, "on one of those cousins with whom he and Thurlow used to giggle, and make giggle, in Southampton Row; Theodora Jane, second daughter of his uncle, Ashley Cowper. She was an accomplished woman, her form elegant, and her understanding more than ordinarily good." The first effect upon him was the removal of that bashfulness which had disqualified, as well as indisposed him for entrance into general society: he began not only to take a part, but even to distinguish himself in conversation; and had the course of true love, contrary to its natural tendency and bias, run smooth, England might have gained a chancellor, and the world might have lost a poet. But the effect of female ascendancy upon the mind of Cowper, even in the least influential relation of the three, that of the FRIEND, was only to be proved in the third and last period of life; too late for his own happiness, though not for the benefit of mankind. Mr. Ashley Cowper, though sincerely attached to his nephew, avowed an insuperable objection to the union of the cousins, alleging not only the straitened condition of Cowper's circumstances—an objection capable of being removed—but another, which was insuperable—the near relationship of the parties. Even this, however, is not believed to be the true reason: the probability rather is, that the lady's father had observed symptoms of mental aberration in Cowper's first seizure at the Temple; and that he could not persuade himself to purchase the restoration of his nephew's peace of mind, at the risk of compromising the future happiness of one yet more near and dear. Cowper, unconscious of the real nature of the objection, exerted himself to overcome it; and, through the influence of a relation, most generously and disinterestedly exerted in his behalf, obtained the lucrative and honourable post of Reading-clerk to the House of Lords, which was afterwards exchanged for that of Clerk to the Journals. An interval, however, was to elapse before he entered upon the duties of the office; and in the meantime his relation's right to nominate was called in question, and it was intimated that Cowper must expect an examination at the bar of the House, touching his sufficiency for the post he had taken. "They," he said, "whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public exhibition of themselves is mortal poison, may have some idea of the horrors of my situation; others can have none." One of his letters at this period has been preserved, and only one, written to his cousin Harriet (Lady Hesketh), the sister of Theodora, in a tone of bitter playfulness, which implies much, though it expresses little. The following extracts may be taken, the first as

illustrative of our preceding remarks ; the second as intimating his position at this time with regard to one whom he dared not name :—

“ My destination is settled at last, and I have obtained a furlough. Margate is the word ; and what do you think will ensue, cousin ? I know what you expect, but, ever since I was born, I have been good at disappointing the most natural expectations. Many years ago, cousin, there was a possibility that I might prove a very different thing from what I am at present. My character is now fixed, and riveted fast upon me, and, between friends, is not a very splendid one, nor likely to be guilty of much fascination. . . .

“ Adieu, my dear cousin. So much as I love you, I wonder how it has happened I was never in love with you. Thank Heaven that I never was ; for at this time I have had a pleasure in writing to you, *which in that case I should have forfeited.*”

The circumstances attendant on this twofold trial are detailed, with fearful accuracy, by Cowper himself ; and never was there a more touching or a more terrific picture of the progress of mental aberration. The mortal poison of the public exhibition was aided in its deadly work by the absence of the only influence which could have counteracted it ; and the struggles of nature were interpreted, by an unquiet conscience, to be the penal visitations of an offended God. In this state he not only meditated, but more than once attempted, self-destruction. He not only discovered in himself the symptoms of approaching madness, but wished, and even prayed, that reason might fail him before the dreaded moment arrived. Finding him in this state of agonizing suspense, his relation, who was, indeed, the “ friend that sticketh closer than a brother,” advised his resignation of the appointment, though at the risk of losing the right of nomination altogether. But the removal of his anxiety was not the restoration of his peace. He abandoned, indeed, all thoughts of self-destruction, and sought the Scriptures ; not, however, for the promises of the Gospel, but for the penalties of the Law. From his former relapse into a state of practical desertion from God, after strong convictions, he drew the terrible inference that he must have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. We draw a veil over the scenes that followed. He was placed under the care of Dr. Cotton, then resident at St. Albans, and eminent not only for his skill as a physician, but his well-known humanity and sweetness of temper. The doctor’s treatment of his patient, not then illustrious, but only like the other inmates of his house, un-

happy, has received, for its earthly recompense, what it deserved—a share of Cowper's immortality of fame.

... "Cotton, whose humanity sheds rays
That make superior skill his second praise."

His care of Cowper's spiritual malady has, or will have, a higher, and a better, and a more enduring reward.

After about eight weeks of intense and unutterable mental agony, Cowper's recovery was almost as instantaneous as his seizure had been: his views of divine mercy became, as if by miracle, as bright and clear as his consciousness of divine justice had been fraught with darkness and despair. "My physician," he says, "ever watchful and apprehensive for my welfare, was now alarmed lest the sudden transition from despair to joy should terminate in a fatal frenzy. 'But the Lord was my strength and my song, and was become my salvation.' In a short time Dr. C. became satisfied, and acquiesced in the soundness of my cure; and much sweet communion I had with him concerning the things of our salvation." It is only natural that Cowper should have been unwilling to quit the abode where the light of God's countenance had broken in upon the darkness of his soul, and the "beloved physician" who so well knew how to administer to a mind diseased. Cowper reckoned it, indeed, among his special mercies, that he had fallen, in the hour of his extremity, on such a friend. "I was not only treated by him with the greatest tenderness while I was ill, and attended with the utmost diligence, but when my reason was restored to me, and I had so much need of a religious friend to converse with, to whom I could open my heart on the subject without reserve, I could hardly have found a fitter person for the purpose. My eagerness and anxiety to settle my opinions upon that long-neglected point made it necessary that, while my mind was yet weak, and my spirits uncertain, I should have some assistance. The doctor was as ready to administer relief to me in this article likewise, and as well qualified to do it, as in that which was more immediately his province. How many physicians would have thought this an irregular appetite, and a symptom of remaining madness! But if it were, my friend was as mad as myself; and it was well for me that it was so."

He could not, however, continue to indulge himself in the society which had proved so truly remedial both to body and mind. He had already incurred a debt to Dr. Cotton, which he could only hope to liquidate, in the state of his finances, by practising the most rigid economy; and he accordingly desired

his brother, then a Fellow of the "old house,"*—which is endeared to the writer of this essay by the remembrance of years not unpleasantly, and, he hopes, not unprofitably, spent within its walls, and to which Cowper has paid an elegant and not unmerited compliment in his verse, as a college "in which order yet was sacred,"—to obtain for him lodgings in the neighbourhood of Cambridge. John Cowper made many attempts, but could obtain none nearer than Huntingdon, which accordingly were engaged; and in June 1765 William proceeded thither, having spent four days at Cambridge with his brother, who accompanied him to Huntingdon, and left him, without introduction to any neighbour, in possession of his solitary abode. "I felt," says Cowper, "like a traveller in an inhospitable desert, without a friend to comfort or a guide to direct him." But he soon remembered that he had both in his God; and a very short interval elapsed before Divine Providence introduced both to him, in the society which the place itself afforded. "He did for me," says Cowper, "more than I had asked or thought." He made acquaintance with "the race of the Unwins;" consisting, as he writes to his cousin, "of father and mother, and son and daughter; the most comfortable, social folks you ever knew." It was one of these who was destined, in the order of Providence, to supply, throughout the third and last period of Cowper's life, that "aching void," which had impregnated with bitterness the sweet season of childhood, and quenched the ardent aspirations of ingenuous youth; combining in herself the patient solicitude of the mother, and the unresting, unwearying tenderness of the wife. In two letters, written within a week of each other—one to his cousin Lady Hesketh, and the other to his friend Hill—he thus describes the impression which was so lively, and which was destined to be so enduring. We will take first the secular part of the portrait:—

"I have added another family to the number of those I was acquainted with while you were here. Their name is Unwin; the most agreeable people imaginable; the old gentleman a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as Parson Adams. His wife has a very uncommon understanding; has read much, to excellent purpose; and is more polite than a duchess.

"Since I wrote the above, I met Mrs. Unwin in the street, and went home with her. She and I walked together nearly two hours, in the garden, and had a conversation which did me more good than I should have received from an audience of the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me; and I never

* Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

see her without being the better for her company. It was my earnest request, before I left St. Albans, that wherever it might please Providence to dispose of me, I might meet with such an acquaintance as I find in Mrs. Unwin."

With such impressions—and they were fully reciprocated by their object—Cowper availed himself with trembling anxiety of an opening which presented itself for becoming an inmate in the family by which he was already so much beloved. A young gentleman, who had lived with Mr. Unwin as a pupil, had just gone to Cambridge: Cowper thought it not improbable that he might be allowed to succeed as a boarder, though not as a pupil. The arrangement, which was to exercise so powerful an influence over his succeeding years, was concluded within five days after he first began to dream of the matter; and in November 1765 he transferred himself to his new abode, which, in the addition made both to his social enjoyment and spiritual improvement, more than equalled his most sanguine anticipations. After describing the routine of the day, in a letter to his cousin, Mrs. Cowper, he adds: "I need not tell you that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness: accordingly, we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something like a filial one for her: and her son and I are brothers. Blessed be the God of our salvation, for such companions, and for such a life: above all, for a heart to relish it."

But "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" and the current of existence, were it to run smoothly and evenly through life, might fail in leading us to the haven where we would be. In July 1767, as Mr. Unwin was going, on Sunday morning, to serve his church, he was thrown from his horse, and the back part of his skull was fractured. "At nine o'clock," says Cowper, "he was in perfect health, and as likely to live twenty years as either of us; and before ten was stretched speechless and senseless upon a flock bed, in a poor cottage, where (it being impossible to remove him) he died on Thursday evening. I heard his dying groans, the effect of great agony, for he was a strong man, and much convulsed in his last moments. The few short intervals of sense that were allowed him he spent in earnest prayer, and in expressions of a firm trust and confidence in the only Saviour." To another correspondent he writes: "The effect of this upon my circumstances will only be a change in the place of my abode; for I shall still, by God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose behaviour to me has always been that of a mother to a son. We know not yet where

we shall go ; but we trust that the Lord, whom we seek, will go before us, and prepare a rest for us."

The confidence so touchingly expressed was not in vain. The Rev. John Newton, then curate of Olney, had been requested, whenever he might pass through Huntingdon, to pay a visit to Mrs. Unwin, as one in whose views of religious truth an important change had taken place, and who required the counsel of an experienced guide. The providence of God ordered that this visit, so important in its consequences to the destiny of Cowper, should take place within a few days after the calamitous death of Mr. Unwin. Mr. Newton proposed to the bereaved family to fix their residence at Olney ; and, on their acquiescence, engaged for them a house, so near the vicarage, that, by opening a doorway in the garden wall, they could communicate without going into the street. Hither, then, they removed at Michaelmas ; and from this date commences a new era both in the personal and literary history of Cowper.

Of the former, indeed, excepting as connected with and illustrative of the latter, the limits within which this prefatory essay is necessarily confined, forbid us to speak more. In the year 1770, Cowper's brother, to whom he was most tenderly attached, both on the ground of his own amiable qualities, and as being, beside himself, the only living image of the best of mothers, died at Cambridge, after an illness in which Cowper faithfully discharged the duty of a Christian relative, and of which he has left a most interesting narrative. But the comfort which he had thus kindly and effectually administered, he was destined too soon to need. A horror of great darkness fell upon him ; not, indeed, without giving notice of its approach ; which, if timely heeded, might have been effectual to avert it. This is ascribed, by various biographers, to various causes : to the gloom which pressed upon his spirit after his brother's death ; to the work in which he had been engaged, by Mr. Newton, from the worthiest and most Christian motives, of composing the "Olney Hymns," which, treating the subjects of Christian experience, and compelling him to retrace *veteris vestigia flammæ*, lighted again the flame itself ; to the ministerial exercises in which he was employed by Mr. Newton, and which must have been formidable in the extreme to one who regarded any public exhibition in the light of a "mortal poison ;" and, lastly, to a cause which one biographer indignantly repudiates, and another as confidently affirms—"It is said that he proposed marriage to Mrs. Unwin, who was now left alone with him, her son being settled on the living of Stock, in Essex, and her daughter about to be united in marriage to a

clergyman ; that the proposal was accepted, and the time fixed ; but that his mind, sensitive at all times, could not endure the excitement of contemplating so great a change, and gave way in the struggle between the claims of the present Mary and the remembrance of the absent but unforgotten Theodora." Dr. Southey asserts, that no such engagement was known to, or suspected by, Mr. Newton, the first person to whom it would probably have been made known ; the last, certainly, from whom it could have been concealed. Our own impression is—but we state it with great diffidence, and in the allegorical language of the "ingenious Dreamer" in whom Cowper so greatly delighted—that he was brought back from the Valley of Humiliation to the Slough of Despond, by the occupation in which he was engaged ; and that the "remembrance of old sins," added to that acute perception of indwelling infirmities and corruptions which is ever associated with the attainment of Christian experience, was too oppressive for a mind which was not less keenly alive to its own defects, than quick to discover and ready to acknowledge the excellencies of another. Had any part in such a volume as the "Olney Hymns" being assigned to Cowper, it should have been that of encouragement and consolation. It must be remembered that he speaks of his twelve years in the Temple as having been "spent in an uninterrupted course of sinful indulgence ;" and though his biographer endeavours to extenuate the force of the expression, by saying, "that in such words, so used, by one in his state of mind, more meets the ear than is meant,"—yet it is at least evident, that, in Cowper's judgment of himself, he said nothing which he did not mean, and which he did not feel. However this may be, the case had become one of decided insanity in January 1773 ; and Dr. Cotton was not consulted until several months afterwards, and then only by letter, when he pronounced it, on the symptoms detailed, to be one of peculiar difficulty. Of protracted duration it undoubtedly was ; for we do not find Cowper resuming his correspondence with any of his friends till the close of the year 1776. This was the first hopeful symptom ; the second was the revival of his love of literature. "I have been reading Gray's works," he said, "and think him the only poet, since Shakspeare, entitled to the character of the sublime. I once thought Swift's Letters the best that could be written, but I like Gray's better." Little did he think, when he wrote this, that a day would arrive when the world would prefer his own Letters to those of Gray, as much as he could prefer Gray's to those of Swift. From this the transition was natural and easy to the third step—the exercise of his own muse. In 1778 his old

acquaintance Thurlow was elevated to the chancellorship, which event naturally called forth a few congratulatory stanzas; and thus the habit of versifying gained upon him. About this time also he wrote the "Report of an Adjudged Case, not to be found in any of the Books;" which he dispatched to his friend Hill, remarking on the happiness of the man who knew just enough of law to make himself a little merry now and then with the liveliness of judicial proceedings. About this time, too (1780), Mrs. Unwin, his better genius, threw out a suggestion which, had it been earlier adopted, might have saved him from the weight of mental depression under which he groaned, and which even now soothed, though it could no longer save. Knowing his peculiar bias towards moral satire, she urged him to undertake a work of some length in this department, and proposed for a subject the "Progress of Error." He communicated his intention to Mr. Newton, in words which seem to imply that he was not without apprehension of a check. "Don't be alarmed," he writes; "I ride Pegasus with a curb; he will never run away with me. I have even convinced Mrs. Unwin that I can manage him, and make him stop where I please. It is no easy matter for the owner of a mind like mine to divert it from sad subjects, and fix it upon such as may administer to its amusement. Poetry, above all things, is useful to me in this respect. While I am held in pursuit of pretty images, or a pretty way of expressing them, I forget everything that is irksome, and, like a boy that plays truant, determine to avail myself of the present opportunity to be amused, and to put by the disagreeable reflection that I must, after all, go home and be whipt again."

The "Progress of Error" was first completed, and submitted for Mr. Newton's *imprimatur*, which, as might have been expected, was not withheld. "Table Talk," "Truth," and "Expostulation," speedily followed. On sending the first of these to Mr. Newton, Cowper characterized it as "a medley of many things: some that may be useful; and some that, for aught I know, may be very diverting. I am merry, that I may decoy people into my company; and grave, that they may be the better for it. Now and then I put on the garb of a philosopher, and take the opportunity that disguise procures me, to drop a word in favour of religion. In short, there is some froth, and here and there a bit of sweetmeat; which seem to entitle it justly to the name of a certain dish the ladies call a trifle. I did not choose to be more facetious, lest I should consult the taste of my readers at the expense of my own approbation; nor more serious than I have been, lest I should forfeit theirs. A poet, in my

circumstances, has a difficult part to act; one minute obliged to bridle his humour, if he has any; and the next, to clap a spur to the sides of it; now ready to weep, from a sense of the importance of his subject; and, on a sudden, constrained to laugh, lest his gravity should be mistaken for distress. If this be not violent exercise for the mind, I know not what is; and if any man doubt it, let him try."

The act of trying, however, has been made so arduous a task by the brilliant success of Cowper's experiment, that few would be willing to take him at his word. The line of composition which he had struck out, was, in its application at least, perfectly original, and promised to be—a promise which has been abundantly realized—pre-eminently useful. This, indeed, was the object nearest to the writer's heart. "I think I can truly say," he wrote to Mr. Newton, "what, perhaps, few poets could, that, though I have no objection to lucrative consequences, if any such should follow, they are not my aim; much less is it my ambition to exhibit myself to the world as a genius. My sole drift is to be useful; at which, however, I knew I should in vain aim, unless I could be entertaining. I have, therefore, fixed these two strings to my bow; and, by the help of both, have done my best to send my arrow to the mark. My readers will hardly have begun to laugh, before they will be called upon to correct their levity, and peruse me with a more serious air. I cast a sidelong glance at the good liking of the world at large, more for the sake of their advantage, and their instruction, than their praise. They are children: if we give them physic, we must sweeten the rim of the cup with honey."

It would be an act of injustice to the memory of Cowper, and a want of due regard to the moral benefit of his readers, did we omit to bring together these familiar communications, which constitute a far better introduction to the "Poems" than the most elaborate criticism could do; because they develop, in the most pleasing, natural, and forcible manner, the motives and intentions of the writer. Not only so, but they explain a mixture which might otherwise have seemed incongruous, and account for transitions which might otherwise have appeared abrupt. If the pupil is to be profited, the moral teacher must be read. "If," said Cowper himself, "my Muse were to go forth clad in Quaker colour, without one bit of ribbon to enliven her appearance, she might walk from one end of London to the other, as little noticed as if she were one of the sisterhood indeed." The "bits of ribbon," indeed, were not always in unison with the graver taste of Mr. Newton (who yet could be as innocently

jocular as any Christian man ought to be); and on one occasion he objected to a passage which Cowper had intended "merely by way of catch:" the poet showed the strength of his principles, as well as the sincerity of his regard, by expunging it, though he confesses he thought it not unlikely to answer the purpose. Those only can appreciate the difficulty of such a sacrifice, who have been called upon to make it. After a more than usual endurance of this mental discipline,—for even the bookseller, Johnson, perused editorially the proof-sheets, and Cowper was so well satisfied with the use that he had made of this liberty, as to recommend future authors to admit this license for a precedent; and after a more than usual prolongation of the torturing interval of suspense,—for proof-sheets then followed each other, not as now, in course of post, but at intervals of a month or six weeks,—the work was at length published, in the early part of 1782. For a time the success of the volume fell short of its extraordinary merit: but, though poetry had become an unsalable commodity in the literary market, it was not such poetry as Cowper's. The Critical Reviewers, indeed, denounced his verses as "in general weak and languid, having neither novelty, spirit, nor animation to recommend them. He never rises to anything that we can commend or admire: he says nothing new, sprightly, or entertaining; travelling on a plain, level, flat road, with great composure, drawn through the dull, dry, and tedious volume, which is little better than a dull sermon in indifferent verse." Dr. Southey characterizes this as one of those defunct criticisms that deserve to be disinterred, and gibbeted, for the sake of example. Happily, it is now of little importance. The ungentle craft of reviewing is no longer, as in those days, either a mystery or a monopoly: not even the heavy broadside of quarterly, much less the lighter discharge of monthly criticism, can now sink the most fragile skiff that is launched upon the ocean of literature, provided she is but sea-worthy; and we smile involuntarily when we find such a man as Cowper saying, in sportive seriousness, "'The Monthly Review,' the most formidable of my judges, is still behind. What will this critical Rhadamanthus say when my shivering genius shall appear before him? Still he keeps me in hot water, and I must wait another month for his award." It came at last—if not to damn with faint praise, yet with just enough of eulogy to save its own credit, without extending Cowper's. The critic *did* find out that Mr. Cowper was a poet *sui generis*; that his style of composition, as well as modes of thinking, were entirely his own. "Mr. Cowper's predominant turn of mind," he said, "though serious and devotional,

is at the same time dryly humorous and sarcastic. Hence his very religion has a smile that is arch, and his sallies of humour an air that is religious; and yet, motley as is the mixture, it is so contrived as to be neither ridiculous nor disgusting." At least it must be acknowledged, that, if this be so, the poetry is very little like the criticism.

Criticism, however, in relation to poems which have taken, and will retain, a high place among the standards of our literature, must now be of little avail. Men need not be told what they are to admire, or what they are to prefer. The banquet is spread out before them—each must choose for himself.

..... "Where acknowledged merits reign,
Praise is impertinent, and censure vain."

To point out wherein Cowper has excelled his predecessors, or wherein his successors, if he can be said to have had any, in the same walk of composition, have improved upon him, might extend the limits, but could hardly increase the interest, of an Introduction like this. We would rather take a hint from the Reviewers, of whom he who rejoices in the misapplied epithet of "Critical" can find nothing to commend or to admire; and he of the "Monthly" looks in vain for language strikingly humorous or strikingly elegant. Yet we think the following epigrammatic strokes well worthy to be commended for their humour; and the loftier passages that follow, not less deserving to be admired for their elegance:—

THE TRAVELLER UNIMPROVED BY TRAVEL.

"Returning, he proclaims, by many a grace,
By shrugs, and strange contortions of his face,
How much a dunce that has been sent to roam
Excels a dunce that has been kept at home."

THE HERMIT

"Wearing out life in his religious whim,
Till his religious whimsey wears out him"

THE DRAWER WITH A LONG BOW.—CAPTAIN BOUNCE.

"Can this be true?—an arch observer cries:
Yes (rather moved), I saw it with these eyes.
Sir, I believe it on that ground alone;
I could not, had I seen it with my own."

THE IDLER.

"An idler is a watch that wants both hands;
As useless when it goes as when it stands."

HYPOCHONDRIACS.

“And now, alas—for unforeseen mishaps !
 They put on a damp nightcap, and relapse.
 They thought they must have died, they were so bad ;
 Their peevish hearers almost wish they had.”

THE MAN OF PLEASURE.

“He likes the country ; but, in truth, must own,
 Most likes it when he studies it in town.”

MAUDLIN NOVELS.

“Books—the scandal of the shelves—
 In which lewd sensualists print out themselves.”

If these be not striking specimens of genuine humour, they are something better. We know not where to seek for anything parallel, except in Crabbe. And now for language in which one of these arbiters of taste can find nothing “strikingly elegant,” and the other, “nothing to admire:”—

“Poor England ! thou art a devoted deer,
 Beset by every ill but that of fear.
 Thee nations hunt ; all mark thee for a prey ;
 They swarm around thee, and thou stand’st at bay :
 Undaunted still, though wearied and perplexed,
 Once Chatham saved thee ; who shall save thee next ?”

The following extracts combine all the majesty of Dryden with all the melody of Pope :—

SLAVERY.

“Oh ! most degrading of all ills that wait
 On man, a mourner in his best estate !
 All other sorrows Virtue may endure,
 And find submission more than half a cure :
 Grief is itself a medicine, and bestowed
 To improve the fortitude that bears the load ;
 To teach the wanderer, as his woes increase,
 The path of Wisdom —all whose paths are peace ;
 But slavery—Virtue dreads it as her grave :
 Patience itself is meanness in a slave ;
 Or, if the will and sovereignty of God
 Bid suffer it awhile, and kiss the rod,—
 Wait for the dawning of a brighter day,
 And snap the chain the moment when you may.”

TRUTH.

“The works of man inherit, as is just,
 Their author’s frailty, and return to dust ;
 But Truth divine for ever stands secure,
 Its head is guarded, as its base is sure.

Fixed in the rolling flood of endless years,
The pillar of eternal plan appears ;
The raving storm and dashing wave defies,
Built by that Architect who built the skies."

RETRIBUTION.

" Oh, could their ancient Incas rise again,
How would they take up Israel's taunting strain ;
Art thou, too, fallen, Iberia? Do we see
The robber and the murderer weak as we?
Thou that hast wasted Earth, and dared despise
Alike the wrath and mercy of the skies.
Thy pomp is in the grave ; thy glory laid
Low in the pits thine avarice has made.
We come with joy from our eternal rest
To see the oppressor in his turn oppressed.
Art thou the god, the thunder of whose hand
Rolled over all our desolated land ;
Shook principalities and kingdoms down,
And made the mountains tremble at his frown?
The sword shall light upon thy boasted powers,
And waste them as thy sword has wasted ours.
'Tis thus Omnipotence his law fulfils,
And Vengeance executes what Justice wills."

Yet the critic, who *had* read, or at least *ought* to have read this noble and animated passage, could find "nothing to admire!" Surely there must be a petrifying and an obnubilating influence in the very occupation of a reviewer. One would think that the most superficial reader might have found many single lines with enough of massive gold to be wire-drawn throughout a whole poem of ordinary verse : *c. g.*,—

"To smite the poor is treason against God.

Calls Nature from her ivy-mantled den,
And softens human rockwork into men.

... Folly ends where genuine hope begins,
And he that finds his heaven must lose his sins.

He has no hope that never had a fear.

He has one foe, and that one foe the world."

What passage of "Alexander's Feast" itself affords a livelier example of sound echoing to sense than the following?—

"Then Genius danced a bacchanal ; he crowned
The brimming goblet, seized the thyrsus, bound
His brows with ivy, rushed into the field
Of wild imagination, and there reeled,
The victim of his own lascivious fires,
And, dizzy with delight, profaned the sacred wires "

We are far, indeed, from assuming that the Critic might not have found some real grounds for animadversion. Cowper is often harsh and unmusical in his rhythm, and occasionally coarse and almost vulgar in his similes. Not even the extreme license of satirical poetry, which approaches nearest to the *sermo pedestris*, can be so far indulged as to lengthen the short, and shorten the long syllables, in the following verses :—

“ I grant, the sarcasm is too severe,
 Vigilant over all that he has made ;
 But is not Freedom—at least, is not ours —
 Gone thither armed and hungry, returned full ;
 Chargeable only with a human shape ”

And in the following picture of an unreformed House of Commons :—

“ Thy Senate is a scene of civil jar,
 Chaos of contrarieties of war ;
 Where dark and solid, phlegmatic and light,
 Discordant atoms meet, ferment, and fight.
 Where Obstinacy takes his sturdy stand,
 To disconcert what Policy has planned ;
 Where Policy is busied all night long
 In setting right what Faction has set wrong.
 Where flails of oratory thrash the floor,
 That yields them chaff and dust, and nothing more.”

The last couplet, one of those rural similes in which Cowper abounds, in which he delights, and in which he is sometimes peculiarly happy, carries familiarity to the extreme of license, but may well be tolerated for its aptitude. But what shall we say of the following ?—

“ Remorse, the fatal egg, by Pleasure laid
 In every bosom where her nest is made :
 Hatched by the beams of Truth, denies him rest,
 And proves a raging scorpion in his breast.”

Again :—

“ Most satirists are, indeed, a public scourge ;
 Their mildest physic is a farrier's purge ;
 Their acid temper turns, as soon as stirred,
 The milk of their good purpose all to curd.
 A business with an income at its heels
 Furnishes, always, oil for its own wheels.”

And again :—

“ Hook disappointment on the public wheels ”

These, we presume, are what the Reviewer characterizes as coarse and vulgar, and unpoetical, and they are not undeserving of the name: but they are the *maculæ* of many thousand lines;—and, if there be in them a want of polish, assuredly there is no want of power. To use Cowper's own expression, therefore, "we will lay the fault upon the vice of the times, and we will acquit the poet."

Whether these poems, however, had they stood alone, would have attained a high degree of popularity, is doubtful: the winnowing process, which showed how much there was of pure grain, and how little of chaff, would, certainly, have been more tedious in its operation; but as the grave and sober suggestion of one female friend, Mrs. Unwin, had made Cowper an author, so the sportive request of another, Lady Austen, opened to him a more dignified path of composition, which raised his writings to the highest rank in English poetry. She often urged him to try his powers in blank verse; at last he promised to comply with her request, if she would give him a subject; to which she replied, "You can never be in want of a subject; you can write upon any—write upon this sofa." The subject was not quite so unpromising as the "broomstick" of Dean Swift; the Poet accepted the challenge, and the "Task" was begun in the summer of 1783.

A great part of this poem was composed in the winter; a circumstance the more remarkable, as the winter had ordinarily been the season of the Poet's greatest mental depression. He dreaded, beyond expression, the recurrence of the month of January;* but this month (1783) appears to have glided insensibly away, until the progress of the work was interrupted by the freezing of his ink. "It consists, at present," he wrote on February 22, 1784, "of four books and part of a fifth: when the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished; but if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance." His present inability, however, was *only* present;

* "This season of the year is particularly adverse to me; yet not in itself, perhaps, more adverse than any other; but the approach of it always reminds me of the same season in the dreadful seventy-three, and in the more dreadful eighty-six. I cannot help terrifying myself with doleful misgivings and apprehensions; nor is the enemy negligent to seize all the advantage that the winter gives him. Thus, hearing much from him, and having little or no sensible support from God, I suffer inexpressible things till January is over."—*To the Rev. John Newton*, Dec. 9, 1792.

So again: "In the year when I wrote 'The Task,' I was very often most supremely unhappy; and am, under God, indebted in a good part to that work for not having been much worse."

for before the end of autumn 1784, the whole poem was transcribed, and sent to Mr. Unwin for perusal ; and in November was in the press. „Johnson, to whom the publication was offered, accepted it readily, acquiescing in the opinion of the Poet, that it was more *ad captum populi* than its predecessor. Mr. Newton was of a different opinion. He objected to the blank verse, and to the title of the poem. “Blank verse,” replied Cowper, “is susceptible of a much greater diversification of manner than verse in rhyme ; and why the modern writers of it have all thought proper to cast their numbers alike, I know not. Certainly, it was not necessity that compelled them to it. I flatter myself, however, that I have avoided that sameness with others which would entitle me to nothing but a share in one common oblivion with them all. It is possible that, as a reviewer of my former volume found cause to say that he knew not to what class of writers to refer me,* the reviewer of this, whoever he shall be, may see occasion to remark the same singularity. At any rate, though as little apt to be sanguine as most men, and more prone to fear and despond, than to overrate my own productions, I am persuaded that I shall not forfeit anything by this volume that I gained by the last. As to the title, I take it to be the best that is to be had. It is not possible that a book, including such a variety of subjects, and in which no particular one is predominant, should find a title adapted to them all. In such a case it seemed almost necessary to accommodate the name to the incident that gave birth to the poem ; nor does it appear to me that, because I performed more than my task, therefore ‘The Task’ is not a suitable name. I might, indeed, following the example of the Sunday newsmonger, call it the ‘Olio.’ But I should do myself wrong ; for though it have much variety, it has, I trust, no confusion.”

How accurately Cowper judged, is sufficiently evidenced by the result. Singularly enough, however, while this poem was in the press, the fame of the unknown author was being extended far and wide by what had been, at the time, a mere fugitive effusion, the relief of a mood of more than usual melancholy—“The Diverting History of John Gilpin.” This subject was suggested by the lively Lady Austen ; and the story, when complete, was forwarded by Mrs. Unwin to a country newspaper, from which it circulated through the public press, till it attracted the notice of Mr. Richard Sharp, an intimate acquaintance of Henderson, the celebrated actor. Churchmen of this period, it seems, were strangely accustomed to celebrate the season of Lent by public

* “Monthly Review.”

recitations at Freemasons' Hall—a kind of substitute for theatrical amusements, like the ingenious Romanist expedient for supplying the deficiency of meat.* Into this course John Gilpin—especially as being highly seasoned, though not particularly seasonable—was introduced by Henderson. The room was crowded upon every occasion, and the success was attributed much more to John Gilpin than to the serious part of the recitations. The whole audience forgot their Lenten gravity, and chuckled outright; Mrs. Siddons herself, the Tragic Muse, was seen to clap; and overflowing audiences in Freemasons' Hall produced an overflowing circulation out of it. Cowper was both flattered and grieved, by the unexpected celebrity of John Gilpin; but he consoled himself by thinking that “Gilpin might have his use. Causes, in appearance trivial, often produce the most beneficial consequences; and, perhaps, my volumes may now travel to a distance, to which, if they had not been ushered into the world by that notable horseman, they would never have reached. Our temper differs somewhat from that of the ancient Jews. They would neither dance nor weep. We, indeed, weep not, if a man mourn unto us; but I must needs say that, if he pipe, we seem disposed to dance with the greatest alacrity.”

After the usual modicum of teasing, from the dilatoriness of his bookseller, who was “not one to hurry himself into a fever, or break his neck through the violence of his despatch,” the volume at last appeared. The reception of it, both by the author's friends and the world at large, made ample amends for the comparatively cold welcome which had been accorded to his former volume. Cowper writes, that he recollects only one instance “of a reader who has done justice to my first effusions; for I am sure that, in point of expression, they do not fall a jot below my second; and that, in point of subject, they are, for the most part, superior.” This reminds us of Milton's preference of “Paradise Regained,” to his unrivalled poem “Paradise Lost;” and affords another instance, among many, of the risk which those too courteous editors incur, who permit, or even request, poets to review their own productions. Mrs. Unwin had already expressed herself, concerning “The Task,” in terms of affectionate admiration; Mr. Newton, whose candour was equal to his charity, not only withdrew his objections both to the title

* “On Good Friday, Cardinal —— received all the cardinals at dinner, at two o'clock in the afternoon, with many Englishmen, in uniform. The dinner consisted of soup, fish cutlets, and every variety of dish, all made of fish, but indistinguishable, from the richness of the sauces, from any other dinner. This was annual.”—*MS. Journal*, quoted by Dr. Pusey in defence of Number XC.

and manner, but denounced his own judgment, as unworthy hereafter to be trusted; Lord Dartmouth, Cowper's former schoolfellow, a nobleman of fervent piety, as well as of classic attainments, and whose coronet was the least of his distinctions, expressed himself in terms of eulogy abundantly sufficient to satisfy even the author; and Bacon, the celebrated sculptor, in a letter of acknowledgment, warm from the heart, touched the chord which vibrated most deeply through the breast of Cowper, when he wrote: "Indeed, it is nothing more than the truth, when I say that I am heartily glad your book was written, not only on my own account, but because I trust the best interests of mankind will be promoted by it." Cowper had, indeed, been actuated throughout by a reference to those interests—not to the attainment of the praise of men. "My feelings," he says, in a few weeks after the appearance of the book, "are by no means what they were when I published my first volume. I am even so indifferent to the matter, that I can truly assert myself guiltless of the idea of my book sometimes whole days together. God knows that, my mind having been occupied more than twelve years by the contemplation of the most distressing subjects, the world, and its opinion of what I write, has become as unimportant to me as the whistling of a bird in a bush. Despair made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement. Had I not endeavoured to perform my best, it would not have amused me at all. The mere blotting of so much paper would have been but indifferent sport. God gave me grace, also, to wish that I might not write in vain. Accordingly, I have mingled much truth with much trifle, and such truths as deserved at least to be clad as well and as handsomely as I could clothe them. If the world approve me not, so much the worse for them, but not for me. I have only endeavoured to serve them, and the loss will be their own."

Faulty, however, as the world was, and then, as in every age,

"By gazing on itself grown blind,"

it was neither so blind as not to discern the surpassing merits of a work in which intellectual delight and moral instruction and religious feeling were more happily blended than in any which had preceded it, nor yet was it so void of taste as to refuse the mental banquet thus provided. The prophet had honour even in his own country. He was allowed to be a genius at Olney. The schoolmaster and the parson led the van of his admirers. Of the former said Cowper, "He has read my book; and as if fearful that I had overlooked some of them myself, he pointed

out all its beauties. I do assure you the man has a very acute discernment, and a taste that I have no fault to find with." Of the latter he writes, "The Reverend Mr. Scott is my admirer, and thinks my second volume superior to my first." For once, the world was of the same opinion with the Reverend Mr. Scott, and a second edition was called for in the ensuing year. The former volume had sold so slowly, that it was not thought prudent to publish "The Task" and its appendants as a second, but, on the appearance of this second edition, the two volumes were connected, as first and second; and in the numerous editions that have succeeded each other, they have never been disunited.

But there was one consequence of the appearance of this work more dear to the heart of Cowper, more important to his future lot, and more closely interwoven with his memory than all others,—the renewal of his intercourse with her who, with a single exception, had been the dearest friend of his youth, the cousin to whom he wrote (p. xviii.), and who still cherished towards him a feeling of latent tenderness, which wanted only a touch to call it forth. That impulse was given by the publication of this volume, in which she recognized the light and playful spirit of former days, though bursting through the haze of settled melancholy; and her overture was met as it was made. "This is just as it should be," wrote Cowper, in reply; "we are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more are actually returned. I can truly boast of an affection for you, that neither years nor interrupted intercourse have at all abated." In a second letter, after an interval of a very few weeks, he says, "I am happy that my poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from your and my uncle's opinion of it. I honour John Gilpin, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served the purpose well; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to—the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable."

Concerning the poem itself, which was at one and the same time the instrument of restoring to Cowper that kindred intercourse in which his affectionate heart delighted, and placing him at once in the first rank among the poets of his fatherland, it can be necessary to say but little. The great charm of the work is its complete originality—originality even as to the cadence and structure of the verse. "Having imitated no man," he wrote to Mr. Newton, "I may reasonably hope that I shall not incur the

disadvantage of a comparison with my betters. Milton's manner was peculiar; so was Thomson's. He that should write like either of them, would, in my judgment, deserve the name of a copyist, but not a poet. A judicious and sensible reader, therefore, like yourself, will not say that my manner is not good, because it does not resemble theirs; but will rather consider what it is in itself." In itself, then, "The Task" has much of the stateliness of Milton, without being Miltonic; and much of the sweetness of Thomson, without being Thomsonian; but little or nothing of what we might term Cowperism—intending, by that name, the harsh and irregular, and halting or stumbling lines, of which we have given specimens at page xxx. In "Table Talk," and its associate poems, Cowper often soars; in "The Task," we might almost say, he never sinks. The tone of the poem is one of equable and grateful elevation, with occasional flights, in which he has followed Milton more closely than any successor in the same walk has tracked the footsteps of the majestic bard. When he was composing his first volume, Cowper reckoned it an advantage that he had read no English poetry for many years, for he was thus in no danger of being tinctured by the manner of any favourite author. Certain it is that, by what he *did* read, his manner was most powerfully and most profitably tinctured; for who can refrain from observing that his most striking passages are often constructed after the model, and expressed even in the venerable phraseology of Scripture? And though he so far altered his views, after he became an author, as to say, "He that would write should read—not that he may retail the observations of other men, but that, being thus refreshed and replenished, he may find himself in a condition to make and to produce his own;" yet, having been so long a reader of one Book, his mind both retained and imparted the savour of the Oracles of Truth, with which it had been so deeply imbued. One of the finest passages in English poetry is, confessedly, the two or three hundred verses which commence the second book of "The Task," entitled "The Timepiece;" but who does not there trace the poet to a still *divinior vates*, with whose bitter lamentations he sympathized but too deeply?

"Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit
Might never reach me more!"*

And who does not recognize a more than poetical sublimity in the following passages?—

* Jeremiah ix. 1, 2.

" Her palaces are dust ; in all her streets
The voice of singing and the sprightly chord
Are silent ; revelry, and dance, and show
Suffer a syncopé and solemn pause ;
While God performs upon the trembling stage
Of his own works his dreadful part alone."

" But where all
Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts
Of wrath obnoxious, God may choose his mark ;
May punish, if he please, the less, to warn
The more malignant. If he spared not them,
Tremble and be amazed at thine escape,
Far guiltier England, lest he spare not thee !"

" There is yet a liberty unsung
By poets, and by senators unpraised,
Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the power
Of Earth and Hell, confederate, take away ;—
A liberty which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons, have no power to bind ;
Which whoso tastes can be enslaved no more :
'Tis liberty of heart, derived from Heaven ;
Bought with His blood who gave it to mankind,
And sealed with the same token. It is held
By charter, and that charter sanctioned sure
By th' unimpeachable and awful oath
And promise of a God."

" What strains were they
With which Heaven rang, when every star, in haste
To gratulate the new-created Earth,
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God
Shouted for joy !"

We doubt, however, whether anything in the whole range of English poetry—the " Messiah " of Pope itself not excepted—can afford any parallel to the exquisite grouping of prophetic imagery in that splendid passage which describes the millennial glory of the Church, commencing—

" Oh, scenes surpassing fable, and yet true !"

and concluding—

" From every clime they come
To see thy beauty and to share thy joy,
O Sion ! an assembly such as Earth
Saw never—such as Heaven stoops down to see "

We know that it has been the custom of a certain school of commentators and critics to ascribe Cowper's disastrous aberration of mind to his religious views and associations. We think it must be admitted as at least equally clear, that Cowper's intense and enthusiastic study of the Volume of Inspiration has

been mainly instrumental in raising him to the very highest rank among the poets, not only of his own country, but of human kind; and if evidence of this were wanting, we should find it in the fact, that from the time when he returned from Siloa and Mount Calvary to

“The dreams of Pindus, and the Aonian maids,”

the splendour of his genius became obscured. His translation of Homer would have immortalized a poet yet unknown; but it added no fresh laurels to the poetic wreath of the author of “The Task.”

We are, however, anticipating. But after commemorating the publication of “The Task,” we have passed the zenith of Cowper’s literary life. This poem, for once, was appreciated as it deserved. “The immediate reception which it obtained,” says Dr. Southey, “was what the most sanguine friend of the author could not have anticipated; nor had the author himself regarded it as a possibility in any dream of hope. But there never was a season at which such a poem could have appeared with more advantage; and perhaps there never was a poem of which the immediate success, as well as the permanent estimation, might with so much certainty have been predicted. ‘The Task’ was at once descriptive, moral, and satirical. The descriptive parts everywhere bore evidences of a thoughtful mind and gentle spirit, as well as an observant eye; and the moral sentiment which pervaded them gave a charm in which descriptive poetry is often found wanting. The best didactic poems, when compared with ‘The Task,’ are like formal gardens in comparison with woodland scenery.”

We must not, however, dwell any longer on this delightful poem, than which none ever less deserved its name—a poem from which no reader, it is probable, ever rose otherwise than delighted and refreshed, and which, it is certain, was in its composition a source of entertainment and mental invigoration to the writer. “Employment,” he said, writing to Mr. Newton, “and with the pen, is through habit become essential to my wellbeing. For some weeks after I had finished ‘The Task,’ and sent away the last sheet corrected, I was through necessity idle, and suffered not a little in my spirits for being so. One day (it was the 12th of November 1784), being in such distress of mind as was hardly supportable, I took up the ‘Iliad,’ and, merely to divert attention, and with no more preconception of what I was then entering upon than I have at this moment of what I shall be doing this day twenty years hence, translated the first twelve lines of it. The same necessity pressing me again, I had recourse to the

same expedient, and translated more. Every day bringing its occasion for employment with it, every day consequently added something to the work; till at last I began to reflect thus: The 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' together consist of about forty thousand verses. To translate these forty thousand verses will furnish me with occupation for some considerable time. I have already made some progress, and I find it a most agreeable amusement. Homer, in point of purity, is a most blameless writer, and, though he was not an enlightened man, has interspersed many great and valuable truths throughout both his poems: in short, he is, in all respects, a most venerable old gentleman, by an acquaintance with whom no man can disgrace himself. The *literati* are all agreed to a man, that although Pope has given us two pretty poems under Homer's titles, there is not to be found in them the least portion of Homer's spirit, nor the least resemblance of his manner. I will, therefore, try whether I cannot copy him somewhat more happily myself. I have, at least, the advantage of Pope's faults and failings, which, like so many buoys upon a dangerous coast, will serve me to steer by, and will make my chance for success more probable. These, and many other considerations, but especially a mind that abhorred a vacuum as its chief bane, impelled me so effectually to the work that ere long I mean to publish proposals for a subscription to it, having advanced so far as to be warranted in doing so." (Dec. 3, 1785.)

When Cowper had been employed for some time on this arduous subject, however, he had formed so high a standard of the requisites for a translation of Homer, that it would, in all probability, have deterred him from commencing, had he not looked rather to the failures of the translator than the beauties of the original. He found, nevertheless, as much pleasure in the task as he had anticipated. "I have furbished up the tenth book," he sportingly wrote to Lady Hesketh, "till it is as bright as silver, and am now occupied in bestowing the same labour upon the eleventh. . . . This notable job is the delight of my heart; and how sorry shall I be when it is ended!" Nor was this delight impaired by the difficulties which presented themselves. "Though I find," he said, writing to Mr. Rose, "that my best attempts are only introductory to others, and that what to-day I supposed finished, to-morrow I must begin again. Thus it fares with a translator of Homer. To exhibit the majesty of such a poet in a modern language is a task that no man can estimate the difficulty of till he attempts it. To paraphrase him elegantly, to hang him with trappings that do not belong to him, is compara-

tively easy; but to represent him with only his own ornaments, and still to preserve his dignity, is a labour that, if I hope in any measure to achieve it, I am sensible only can be achieved by the most assiduous and most unremitting attention."

Many of the most interesting occurrences of Cowper's domestic life took place during the progress of this work; more particularly his removal from Olney to a much more commodious and eligible residence at Weston; the temporary domestication of Lady Hesketh—who always acted upon Cowper as his better genius—in their family-circle; the sudden death of Mr. Unwin; and a renewed attack of the poet's disorder, which for many months interrupted all his classical and poetical pursuits. "My indisposition," he wrote after his recovery, "could not be of a worse kind. The sight of any face but Mrs. Unwin's was to me an insupportable grievance. From this dreadful condition of mind I emerged suddenly—so suddenly, that Mrs. Unwin, having no notice of such a change herself, could give none to anybody; and when it obtained, how long it might last, or how far it might be depended on, was a matter of the greatest uncertainty." Ten months still passed before he resumed his poetical efforts; but he then returned to them with double zest. "You need not, my dear," he wrote to Lady Hesketh, "be under any apprehension lest I should too soon engage in the translation of Homer. . . . I consider the employment as essential to my present wellbeing, and pursue it accordingly." It is not a little singular that Cowper proceeded at nearly the same rate with his predecessor Pope, who was accustomed to translate thirty or forty verses before he got up, and to correct and polish them at intervals during the day; consequently, about the same period of seven years intervened between the issuing of the first proposals and the completion of the work. It appeared in the summer of 1791, and met with a favourable reception—to which it was, in truth, well entitled; though the author, in his extreme caution to avoid the faults of Pope, had failed in attaining several of his excellencies. The severe criticism of Bentley upon Pope's translation was—"It is a very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer;" and this remark is exactly reversed in the case of Cowper, whose translation may be justly called Homer, but cannot be regarded as a pleasing poem. There is, indeed, a classical stateliness and dignity in the verse; but it is too cold, too correct. It cannot, indeed, be said that Cowper renders word for word; still he is what the Roman poet has termed *nimum fidus interpres*, and, in his anxiety to give a faithful transcript of his author, has suffered much of the energy of the old Grecian

to evaporate in the process. We would compare the original to a gallant vessel, that

“Walks the waters like a thing of life,
And seems to dare the elements to strife;”

Cowper's translation, to the same vessel just about to depart from port, with all her rigging perfect and complete, wanting nothing but the motion of life—the graceful and elastic bounding along the surface of the deep.

Among many pleasing circumstances which followed the appearance of this translation, not the least gratifying to Cowper's affectionate heart was the renewal of his long-suspended intercourse with the friend of his early days—Lord Chancellor Thurlow. Homer furnished the subject of this correspondence. Thurlow entertained doubts about the propriety of translating Homer in blank verse, and sent Cowper two sheets filled with arguments in favour of rhyme, which he was to answer if he could. He *could*, and *did* so answer him, as to convince the Chancellor that Homer might be best translated without rhyme—a result which afforded the poet no little satisfaction. “Such,” he writes to his cousin and confidante, Lady Hesketh, “is the candour of a wise man and a real scholar. I would to Heaven that all prejudiced persons were like him! I answered his letter immediately; and here I suppose our correspondence ends.” Here, however, it did not altogether end. In 1793 Cowper resumes the subject in a letter to Hayley, comparing a translation of his own with Hayley's and Lord Thurlow's, of which he says: “You, with your six lines, have made yourself stiff and ungraceful; and he, with his seven, has produced as good prose as heart can wish, but no poetry at all. A scrupulous attention to the letter has spoiled you both; you have neither the spirit nor the manner of Homer. A portion of both may be found, I believe, in my version, but not so much as I could wish.” In these words Cowper characterizes accurately his printed translation, as well as the passage itself, which we subjoin as the only specimen of his Homeric painting for which our limits will afford scope:—

“O Jove! and all ye gods! grant this my son
To prove, like me, pre-eminent in Troy;
In valour such, and firmness of command!
Be he extolled, when he returns from fight,
As far his sire's superior! may he slay
His enemy, bring home his gory spoils,
And may his mother's heart o'erflow with joy!”

Book Z, 475–481.

There is an ambiguity in the sixth line of this passage, in the reference of the pronoun *his*, which may denote either the gory spoils of the slain enemy, or of the young hero who has slain him. This would have been avoided by close attention to the original; and accordingly it did not satisfy Thurlow, who repeated his objections, and these drew forth another and an improved translation:

" May all who witness his return from fight
Hereafter say—He far excels his sire !
And let him bring back gory trophies, stripped
From foes slain by him, to his mother's joy !"

On this Cowper observes: " Imlac, in 'Rasselas,' says, I forget to whom—' You have convinced me that it is impossible to be a poet.' In like manner, I might say to his lordship— You have convinced me that it is impossible to be a translator. On his terms, at least, it is, I am sure, impossible; on his terms I would defy Homer himself, were he alive, to translate the 'Paradise Lost' into Greek." Yet, even in the second version, Cowper has overlooked one peculiar beauty and delicacy of the original. The translation would seem to imply that the mother of the young hero should rejoice in his having slain foes and brought back gory trophies; and there is something incongruous in the association of maternal tenderness with exultation over fallen enemies. The original has nothing of the kind. The joy of the mother's heart is there called forth only by the safe return of her son.

After the appearance of his Homer, Cowper remained for a time unemployed; not from any lack of literary plans and projects, of which he wrote: " Many are recommended to me. Some call aloud for original verse; others for more translation; and others for other things. Providence, I hope, will direct me in my choice; for other guide I have none, nor wish for another." His bookseller, Johnson, proposed to him the superintendence of an edition of Milton, which should rival, and, if possible, exceed in splendour, Boydell's Shakspeare. His engagement was to translate all the Latin and Italian poems, to select the most approved notes of his predecessors in the same line, and to add elucidations and annotations on the text as he saw proper. Fuseli was to furnish the paintings; and Cowper was, according to his own computation, to be occupied on the work for about two years. He did not, however, derive the satisfaction which he expected from this employment; and when his friend Hurdis had expressed a wish that he was employed on some original work rather than a translation—" To tell you the truth," he replied,

"I am of your mind; and unless I could find another Homer, I shall pause, I believe, and vow, when I have done with Milton, never to translate again. But my veneration for our great countryman is equal to that which I feel for the Grecian; and, consequently, I am happy, and feel myself honourably employed, whatever I do for Milton."

For Milton, however, he could not do what he desired, and his spirits failed in consequence. To the labours of versifying he had, as he says, no objection; but to the labours of criticism he was new, and expected that he should find them wearisome. Nor did the prospect improve as he contemplated the labours before him more intently; "wilds, immeasurably spread, seemed opening to his view." "How often do I wish," he said to Hayley, "in the course of the day, that I could be employed once more in poetry; and how often, of course, that this Miltonic trap had never caught me! The year ninety-two shall stand chronicled in my remembrance as the most melancholy that I have ever known, excepting the few weeks I spent at Earham: and such it has been principally, because, being engaged to Milton, I felt myself no longer free for any other engagement. That ill-fated work, impracticable in itself, has made everything else impracticable."

There were other causes, however, besides this ill-fated engagement, which contributed in a greater degree to press, beyond its powers of endurance, on the too sensitive and susceptible mind of Cowper. Mrs. Unwin's health had long been declining, and her mental powers began now to be impaired with it. The progress of this malady, indeed, was arrested by a visit paid to Hayley, who had recently formed an intimacy with Cowper, ripening at once into the closest friendship. From his beautiful villa in Sussex, Cowper writes thus: "I was in tolerable health before I set out, but have acquired since I came both a better appetite and a knack of sleeping almost as much in a single night as formerly in two. About myself, however, I care little: my chief concern has been about Mrs. Unwin; and my chief comfort at this moment is, that she likewise has received, I hope, considerable benefit by the journey." After the expiration of the visit he again writes: "She returned here with her health considerably amended. It is in the article of speech chiefly, and in her powers of walking, that she is sensible of much improvement. Her sight and her hand still fail her, so that she can neither read nor work — mortifying circumstances both to her, who is never willingly idle." Thus severely tried, it is no wonder that, to use his own forcible expression, "I live under the point

of a sword suspended by a hair;" nor that, when he returned home, he should be unable to prosecute his task. "My spirits are not good enough, nor my mind collected enough, for composition of any kind. How should they be so, when I never wake without words that are a poniard in my bosom, and the pain of which I feel all the day—Mrs. Unwin's approaching and sudden death the constant subject of them. The nature of her disorder is such that it keeps me in a continual fear. In one moment all may be undone again, and I left desolate."

It was not, however, in the form of sudden death that the sword was to descend. Cowper was destined to a more agonizing and protracted form of human misery. As the faculties of Mrs. Unwin decayed, their former position was reversed; and she who had been his comforter, counsellor, and stay, not only clung to him for the solace which she had so often afforded, but exacted from him incessant attention, without regard either to his bodily health or state of mind. "Till she can work and read, and fill up her time as usual," he wrote to his friend Rose, "all which is at present entirely out of her power, I may now and then find time to write a letter; but I shall write nothing more. I cannot sit with my pen in my hand and my books before me, while she is, in effect, in solitude—silent, and looking at the fire. . . . To this is added a want of spirits, such as I have never known, when I was not absolutely laid by, since I commenced author. How long I shall be continued in these uncomfortable circumstances is known only to Him who, as He will, disposes of us all."

But the shadows, instead of dispersing, deepened all around him; and if a fitful gleam of sunshine threw itself along his path, from the visits of those whom he loved best—Lady Hesketh or Mr. Hayley—it was only to relapse into blacker darkness than before. His poetical powers were, indeed, the last to sink: the beautiful poem, "To Mary" (p. 347), written about this period, and coming fresh and full from the heart, may compete with the happiest effusions of the author, and in deep pathos and touching interest may be almost said to excel them all. But "imagination," said his friend Hayley, "can hardly devise any human condition more truly affecting than that of the poet at this period. His generous and faithful guardian, Mrs. Unwin, who had watched over him through seasons of the severest calamity, was now, with faculties and fortune impaired, sinking fast into second childhood. The distress of heart that he felt on beholding the great change in a companion so justly dear to him, conspiring with his constitutional melancholy, was gradually undermining the exqui-

site faculties of his mind. But depressed as he was by these complicated afflictions, Providence was far from deserting that excellent man. His female relation (Lady Hesketh), whose regard he had cultivated, as her favourite correspondent, now devoted herself very nobly to the superintendence of a house whose two interesting inhabitants were rendered, by age and trouble, almost incapable of attending to the ordinary affairs of life. They only who have lived with the superannuated and the melancholy can properly appreciate the value of such magnanimous friendship."

Lady Hesketh came at the close of November 1793, and her intention was to remain till February. She found Cowper, on her arrival, better than she expected; but in the second week of the month which he always dreaded (January), his malady returned, and in its worst form. "He has laboured," said Lady Hesketh, writing in May 1794, "under so dreadful a dejection of spirits, that he is utterly incapable of attending to anything; nor has he ever opened a letter, or suffered one even to be read to him, ever since that time." The friendly care and unrivalled skill of Dr. Willis were tried with but partial success; and, as a last remedy, change of air and scene were prescribed; the arrangements for which were so adroitly contrived by the Rev. Mr. Johnson, the poet's kinsman, and on whom the melancholy charge of the unhappy sufferer devolved, that in August Cowper found himself settled at the village of Mundesley, on the Norfolk coast, whence he indited a despairing letter to Lady Hesketh: "The most forlorn of beings, I tread a shore under the burden of infinite despair, which once I trod all cheerfulness and joy." And again: "I shall never see Weston more. I have been tossed like a ball into a far country, whence there is no rebound for me. There, indeed, I lived a life of infinite despair; and such is my life in Norfolk." In the month of October he was carried to a most commodious habitation—which the exertions of his kind cousin had procured—but without any abatement of the disease. His state of mind was exactly that which the great poet, who was the object of his latest intellectual efforts, had so powerfully described:—

"Me miserable! which way shall I turn?
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair;
Where'er I turn is hell—myself a hell,
And, in the lowest depth, a lower depth
Still yawning to devour me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."

"All my themes of misery," he wrote to Lady Hesketh (Feb. 19, 1796), "may be summed up in one word. He who made

me regrets that ever He did. Many years have passed since I learned this terrible truth from Himself, and the interval has been spent accordingly. Adieu!—I shall write to you no more. I am promised months of continuance here, and should be somewhat less a wretch in my present feelings, could I credit the promise; but effectual care is taken I shall not. The night contradicts the day; and I go down the torrent of life, into the gulf that I have expected to plunge into so long. A few hours remain; but among those few, not one is found, a part of which I shall ever employ in writing to you again. Once more, therefore, adieu! and adieu to the pen for ever!”

On the 17th of December 1796 Mrs. Unwin expired. Cowper expressed a wish to see her; and, on beholding the lifeless form of one whom he had so dearly loved, he flung himself to the other side of the room, with a passionate expression of feeling; the first that he had uttered, or that had been perceived in him, since the last return of his malady, at Weston. Natural emotion thus relieved, he soon became calm; and from that time he never mentioned her name, nor spoke of her again.

He did, however, write two or three times more to Lady Hesketh;—he occupied himself, at intervals, in revising the translation of his Homer;—he wrote his last piece of original poetry, “*The Castaway*” (p. 350), a piece touching in itself, but, under the circumstances, inexpressibly affecting;—he listened occasionally to the reading of his own poems, and other works:—but the history of his remaining years is the sad record of a complete intellectual wreck. In the beginning of the year 1800 his last illness came on. An eminent physician from Norwich, who was visiting a patient in an adjoining village, called upon him, at the request of his kinsman, and asking him, among other questions, how he felt—“*Feel!*” said Cowper; “*I feel unutterable despair!*”

But the hour of his liberation was at hand. On the 25th of April 1800, he became insensible; and departed, on the following day, so peacefully, that, out of the five persons standing round his bed, not one perceived the moment of dissolution. From that moment till the coffin was closed, Dr. Johnson says, the expression with which his countenance had settled was that of calmness and composure, mingled, as it were, with holy suspense. And, as Dr. Southey justly and beautifully remarks, “*in sure and certain hope, indeed, for the deceased, might the remains of Cowper be committed to the ground. And never was there a burial at which the mourners might, with more sincerity of feeling, give their hearty thanks to Almighty God, that it had*

pleased Him to deliver the departed out of the miseries of this sinful world."

Cowper was buried in the church of East Dereham; where a monument was erected to his memory by Lady Hesketh, for which Hayley supplied the following inscription:—

"Ye, who with warmth the public triumph feel,
Of talents dignified by sacred zeal,
Here, to Devotion's Bard devoutly just,
Pay your fond tribute, due to Cowper's dust.
England, exulting in his spotless fame,
Ranks with her dearest sons his favourite name.
Sense, fancy, wit, conspire not all to raise
So clear a title to affection's praise:
His highest honours to the heart belong;
His virtues formed the magic of his song."

This epitaph, unlike many of its class, deserves to be commended, if not for its poetry, yet for its truth. The highest honours which are paid to the memory of Cowper do indeed "belong to the heart;" and such is the "magic of his song," that while there is any virtue, and while there is any praise, his laurels will wear as freshly as they have been worthily earned. So far from having experienced the slightest abatement in consequence of the increased number of competitors in the wide field of ethical and didactic verse, his popularity is rather on the increase, for it is founded on the most enduring basis—the union of the purest Christian morals with the most attractive and animated poetry. The lessons which the Poet reads are lessons of virtue; while the language in which he utters them is the language of the heart: and not only in the wayward impulses and turbulent passions of our nature, but in those sparks of its original brightness which linger still,—those yearnings and aspirations after a higher tone of moral sentiment and feeling than is developed in the sordid and sensual world around us, which, reminding us of what we have forfeited, are made to throw light upon the path in which all may be retrieved,—it is true of every succeeding generation, that, as "face answereth to face in the water-brooks, so answereth the heart of man to man." Those, accordingly, who have experienced, by whatever process, that moral training, that mental discipline, which can arise only from clear perceptions and just applications of the truths of Christianity, and are desirous to communicate the benefit to others, without participation in the suffering which is oftentimes its price, gladly avail themselves of the aid of this sweet melodist;—and there are few among our poets (Milton himself is scarcely an exception) whom the Christian parent commits with such implicit

confidence to the intellectual companionship of his child. In the first development of manhood or of womanhood, to read Cowper's works without pleasure is scarcely possible for a cultivated mind; and still less so to read them with pleasure, and at the same time to read them without profit. He declared, while living, that "his sole drift" was to be useful:—never was a purpose more honestly declared, nor, we believe, more abundantly and effectually fulfilled.

We have purposely refrained from encumbering this brief notice with any remarks on the peculiar delusion under which Cowper laboured during a large portion of his life, and which caused him such protracted, and at times intolerable agony; which precluded him from even attempting to apply the consolations of the gospel, under the appalling notion that he had been from the beginning a vessel of wrath, fitted for, and destined only to destruction. This has been ascribed by some of his biographers to excess of religious feeling: whether it is not rather attributable to that defect of religious cultivation in his earlier years which, when the desolation came upon him, left him unprovided with a refuge and a comforter, may be reasonably inferred from other evidence, and is altogether conclusive from his own. But for the healing influence of the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the gospel (the effect of which he has so touchingly described, p. xix.), it is highly probable that his whole existence would have been one period of intellectual darkness, unilluminated by a single ray of mental light, and that no memorial would have remained upon earth to tell that he had ever been—that his worldly portion would have been through life the maniac's cell, and in death the maniac's grave. Whether, delighting as he did in the beauties of nature, developed all around him, and drawn away by their sweet yet powerful attraction, from the contemplation of his own imaged misery, he did not himself enjoy more of happiness, or at least endure less of suffering than he would have done in a state of mental aberration and insensibility to external objects, will scarcely be a question; but even were it otherwise, the suffering is over and the benefit remains. We speak not of the immortality of fame, which is now intrinsically, and will one day be proved manifestly, worthless. The full extent of Cowper's usefulness, as a teacher of Christian morals, and a guide to Christian truth, will only, we believe, be known and appreciated in that day, when, however dark and perplexed may have been their earthly course, "they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."



COWPER'S POEMS.

TABLE TALK.

Si te fortè meæ gravis uret sarcina chartæ,
Abjicito. Hor., *Lib. i. Epist. 13*

A. You told me, I remember, glory, built
On selfish principles, is shame and guilt ;
The deeds that men admire as half divine,
Stark naught, because corrupt in their design.
Strange doctrine this ! that without scruple tears
The laurel that the very lightning spares ;
Brings down the warrior's trophy to the dust,
And eats into his bloody sword like rust.

B. I grant that, men continuing what they are,
Fierce, avaricious, proud, there must be war :
And never meant the rule should be applied
To him that fights with justice on his side.
Let laurels, drenched in pure Parnassian dews,
Reward his mem'ry, dear to every muse,
Who, with a courage of unshaken root,
In honour's field advancing his firm foot,
Plants it upon the line that justice draws,
And will prevail or perish in her cause.
'Tis to the virtues of such men, man owes
His portion in the good that Heaven bestows.
And when recording history displays
Feats of renown, though wrought in ancient days ;

Table Talk.



Tells of a few stout hearts, that fought and died.
Where duty placed them, at their country's side :
The man that is not moved with what he reads,
That takes not fire at their heroic deeds,
Unworthy of the blessings of the brave,
Is base in kind, and born to be a slave. .
• But let eternal infamy pursue
The wretch, to nought but his ambition true ;
Who, for the sake of filling with one blast
The post-horns of all Europe, lays her waste.

Table Talk.

Think yourself stationed on a tow'ring rock,
To see a people scattered like a flock,
Some royal mastiff panting at their heels,
With all the savage thirst a tiger feels ;
Then view him self-proclaimed in a gazette,
Chief monster that has plagued the nations yet.
The globe and sceptre, in such hands misplaced,
Those ensigns of dominion, how disgraced !
The glass, that bids man mark the fleeting hour,
And death's own scythe, would better speak his power ;
Then grace the hony phantom in their stead,
With the king's shoulder-knot and gay cockade ;
Clothe the twin brethren in each other's dress,
The same their occupation and success. *

A. 'Tis your belief the world was made for man ;
Kings do but reason on the self-same plan : ⁴
Maintaining yours, you cannot theirs condemn,
Who think, or seem to think, man made for them.

B. Seldom, alas ! the power of logic reigns
With much sufficiency in royal brains ;
Such reas'ning falls like an inverted cone,
Wanting its proper base to stand upon.
Man made for kings ! those optics are but dim !
That tell you so—say rather, they for him.
That were indeed a king-ennobling thought,
Could they, or would they, reason as they ought.
The diadem, with mighty projects lined,
To catch renown by ruining mankind,
Is worth, with all its gold and glittering store,
Just what the toy will sell for, and no more.

Oh ! bright occasions of dispensing good,
How seldom used, how little understood !
To pour in virtue's lap her just reward ;
Keep vice restrained behind a double guard ;
To quell the faction that affronts the throne,
By silent magnanimity alone ;
To nurse with tender care the thriving arts,
2 Watch every beam philosophy imparts ;

To give religion her unbridled scope,
 Nor judg'd by statute a believer's hope ;
 With close fidelity and love unfeigned,
 To keep the matrimonial bond unstained :
 Covetous only of a virtuous praise—
 His life a lesson to the land he sways ;
 To touch the sword with conscientious awe,
 Nor draw it but when duty bids him draw ;
 To sheath it in the peace-restoring close,
 With joy beyond what victory bestows ;—
 Blest country, where these kingly glories shine !
 Blest England, if this happiness be thine !

A. Guard what you say ; the patriotic tribe
 Will sneer and charge you with a bribe.

B. A bribe ?

The worth of his three kingdoms I defy,
 To lure me to the baseness of a lie :
 And, of all lies (be that one poet's boast),
 The lie that flatters I abhor the most.
 Those arts be theirs who hate his gentle reign,
 But he that loves him has no need to feign.

A. Your smooth eulogium to one crown addressed,
 Seems to imply a censure on the rest.

B. Quevedo, as he tells his sober tale,
 Asked, when in hell, to see the royal jail ;
 Approved their method in all other things :
 But where, good sir, do you confine your kings ?
 There—said his guide—the group is full in view.
 Indeed !—replied the don—there are but few.
 His black interpreter the charge disdained—
 Few, fellow ! there are all that ever reigned.

Wit, undistinguishing, is apt to strike
 The guilty and not guilty both alike.

I grant the sarcasm is too severe,
 And we can readily refute it here ;
 While Alfred's name, the father of his age,
 And the Sixth Edward's grace th' historic page.

A. Kings then, at last, have but the lot of all ;
By their own conduct they must stand or fall.

B. True. While they live, the courtly laureat pays
His quitrent ode, his peppercorn of praise ;
And many a dunce, whose fingers itch to write,
Adds, as he can, his tributary mite :
A subject's faults a subject may proclaim,
A monarch's errors are forbidden game !
Thus, free from censure, overawed by fear,
And praised for virtues that they scorn to wear,
The fleeting forms of majesty engage
Respect, while stalking o'er life's narrow stage ;
Then leave their crimes for history to scan,
And ask with busy scorn, Was this the man ?

I pity kings, whom worship waits upon
Obsequious from the cradle to the throne ;
Before whose infant eyes the flatt'rer bows,
And binds a wreath about their baby brows ;
Whom education stiffens into state,
And death awakens from that dream too late.
Oh ! if servility with supple knees,
Whose trade it is to smile, to crouch, to please ;
If smooth dissimulation, skilled to grace
A devil's purpose with an angel's face ;
If smiling peeresses, and simpering peers,
Encompassing his throne a few short years ;
If the gilt carriage and the pampered steed,
That wants no driving, and disdains the lead ;
If guards, mechanically formed in ranks,
Playing, at beat of drum, their martial pranks,
Should'ring, and standing as if stuck to stone,
While condescending majesty looks on ;
If monarchy consist in such base things,
Sighing, I say again, I pity kings !

To be suspected, thwarted, and withstood,
E'en when he labours for his country's good
To see a band, called patriot for no cause
But that they catch at popular applause,

Careless of all th' anxiety he feels,
) Hook disappointment on the public wheels ;
 With all their flippant fluency of tongue,
 Most confident, when palpably most wrong ;—
) If this be kingly, then farewell, for me,
 All kingship ; and may I be poor and free !



To be the Table Talk of clubs up-stairs,
 To which th' unwashed artificer repairs,
 To indulge his genius after long fatigue,
 By diving into cabinet intrigue
 (For what kings deem a toil, as well they may,
 To him is relaxation and mere play) ;
 To win no praise when well-wrought plans prevail,
 But to be rudely censured when they fail ;
 To doubt the love his fav'rites may pretend,
 And in reality to find no friend ;
 If he indulge a cultivated taste,
 His galleries with the works of art well graced,
 To hear it called extravagance and waste ;
 If these attendants, and if such as these,
 Must follow royalty, then welcome ease ;

However humble and confined the sphere,
Happy the state that has not these to fear.

C. A. Thus men, whose thoughts contemplative have dwell
On situations that they never felt,
Start up sagacious, covered with the dust
Of dreaming study and pedantic rust,
And prate and preach about what others prove,
As if the world and they were hand and glove.
Leave kingly backs to cope with kingly cares;
They have their weight to carry, subjects theirs;
Poets, of all men, ever least regret
Increasing taxes and the nation's debt.
Could you contrive the payment, and rehearse
The mighty plan, oracular, in verse,
No bard, howe'er majestic, old or new,
Should claim my fixed attention more than you.

B. Not Brindley nor Bridgewater would essay
To turn the course of Helicon that way;
Nor would the Nine consent the sacred tide
Should purl amidst the traffic of Cheapside,
Or tinkle in 'Change Alley, to amuse
The leathern ears of stockjobbers and Jews.

A. Vouchsafe, at least, to pitch the key of rhyme
To themes more pertinent, if less sublime.

When ministers and ministerial arts;
Patriots, who love good places at their hearts;
When admirals, extolled for standing still,
Or doing nothing with a deal of skill;
Generals, who will not conquer when they may,
Firm friends to peace, to pleasure, and good pay;
When freedom, wounded almost to despair,
Though discontent alone can find out where;
When themes like these employ the poet's tongue,
I hear as mute as if a syren sung.

Or tell me, if you can, what power maintains
A Briton's scorn of arbitrary chains; *Despot*
That were a theme might animate the dead,
And move the lips of poets cast in lead.

B. The cause, though worth the search, may yet elude
 Conjecture and remark, however shrewd.
 They take, perhaps, a well-directed aim,
 Who seek it in his climate and his frame.
 Liberal in all things else, yet Nature here
 With stern severity deals out the year.
 Winter invades the spring, and often pours
 A chilling flood on summer's drooping flowers;
 Unwelcome vapours quench autumnal beams,
 Ungenial blasts attending curl the streams;
 The peasants urge their harvest, ply the fork
 With double toil, and shiver at their work;
 Thus, with a rigour, for his good design'd
 She rears her favourite man of all mankind.
 His form robust, and of elastic tone,
 Proportioned well, half muscle and half bone,
 Supplies with warm activity and force
 A mind well-lodged, and masculine of course.—
 Hence liberty, sweet liberty, inspires
 And keeps alive his fierce but noble fires.
 Patient of constitutional control,
 He bears it with meek manliness of soul;
 But, if authority grow wanton, woe
 To him that treads upon his free-born toe;
 One step beyond the boundary of the laws
 Fires him at once in freedom's glorious cause.
 Thus proud prerogative not much revered,
 Is seldom felt, though sometimes seen and heard;
 And in his cage, like parrot fine and gay,
 Is kept to strut, look big, and talk away.
 Born in a climate softer far than ours,
 Not formed, like us, with such Herculean powers,
 The Frenchman, easy, debonair, and brisk—
 Give him his lass, his fiddle, and his frisk—
 Is always happy, reign whoever may,
 And laughs the sense of misery far away.
 He drinks his simple beverage with a gust;
 And, feasting on an onion and a crust,

We never feel the alacrity and joy,
 With which he shouts and carols *Vive le Roi*,
 Fill'd with as much true merriment and glee,
 As if he heard his king say—Slave, be free.



Thus happiness depends, as Nature shows,
 Less on exterior things than most suppose.
 Vigilant over all that he has made,
 Kind Providence attends with gracious aid ;
 Bids equity throughout his works prevail,
 And weighs the nations in an even scale ;
 He can encourage slavery to a smile,
 And fill with discontent a British isle.
 A. Freeman and slave then, if the case be such,
 Stand on a level ; and you prove too much :
 If all men indiscriminately share
 His fostering power and tutelary care,

As well be yoked by despotism's hand,
As dwell at large in Briton's charter'd land.

B. No. Freedom has a thousand charms to show
That slaves, how'er contented, never know.
The mind attains, beneath her happy reign,
The growth that Nature meant she should attain :
The varied fields of science, ever new,
Opening and wider opening on her view,
She ventures onward with a prosperous force,
While no base fear impedes her in her course.
Religion, richest favour of the skies,
Stands most revealed before the freeman's eyes ;
~~No shades of superstition blot the day,~~
Liberty chases all that gloom away ;
The soul emancipated, unoppressed,
Free to prove all things, and hold fast the best,
Learns much, and to a thousand list'ning minds
Communicates with joy the good she finds ; &
Courage in arms, and ever prompt to show
His manly forehead to the fiercest foe ;
Glorious in war, but for the sake of peace,
His spirits rising as his toils increase,
Guards well what arts and industry have won,
And freedom claims him for her first-born son.
Slaves fight for what were better cast away—
The chain that binds them, and a tyrant's sway ;
But they that fight for freedom undertake
The noblest cause mankind can have at stake :—
Religion, virtue, truth, whate'er we call
A blessing—freedom is the pledge of all.
O liberty ! the prisoner's pleasing dream,
The poet's muse, his passion, and his theme ;
Genius is thine, and thou art fancy's nurse ;
Lost without thee th' ennobling powers of verse ;
Heroic song from thy free touch acquires
Its clearest tone, the rapture it inspires :
Place me where winter breathes his keenest air,
And I will sing, if liberty be there ;

And I will sing at liberty's dear feet,
In Afric's torrid clime, or India's fiercest heat.

A. Sing where you please; in such a cause I grant
An English poet's privilege to rant;
But is not freedom—at least is not ours—
Too apt to play the wanton with her powers,
Grow freakish, and, o'erleaping every mound,
Spread ^{anarchy} ~~anarchy~~ and terror all around?

B. Agreed. But would you sell or slay your horse
For bounding and curvetting in his course?

Or if, when ridden with a careless rein,

He break away, and seek the distant plain?

No. His high metal, under good control,

Gives him Olympic speed, and shoots him to the goal

Let discipline employ her wholesome arts;

Let magistrates alert perform their parts,

Not ~~skulk~~, or put on a prudential mask,

As if their duty were a desperate task;

Let active laws apply the needful curb,

To guard the peace that riot would disurb;

And liberty, preserved from wild excess,

Shall raise no feuds for armies to suppress.

When tumult lately burst his prison-door,

And set plebeian thousands in a roar;

When he usurped authority's just place,

And dared to look his master in the face;

When the rude rabble's watchword was, Destroy,

And blazing London seemed a second Troy;

Liberty blushed, and hung her drooping head,

Beheld their progress with the deepest dread;

Blushed, that effects like these she should produce,

Worse than the deeds of galley-slaves broke loose.

She loses in such storms her very name,

And fierce licentiousness should bear the blame.

Incomparable gem! thy worth untold;

Cheap though blood-bought, and thrown away when sold;

May no foes ravish thee, and no false friend

Betray thee, while professing to defend!

Prize it, ye ministers ; ye monarchs, spare ;
Ye patriots, guard it with a miser's care.

A. Patriots, alas ! the few that have been found
Where most they flourish, upon English ground,
The country's need have scantily supplied,
And the last left the scene when Chatham died.

B. Not so—the virtue still adorns our age,
Though the chief actor died upon the stage.
In him Demosthenes was heard again ;
Liberty taught him her Athenian strain ;
She clothed him with authority and awe,
Spoke from his lips, and in his looks gave law.
His speech, his form, his action, full of grace,
And all his country beaming in his face,
He stood, as some inimitable hand *ever*
Would strive to make a Paul or Tully stand.
No sycophant or slave that dared oppose
Her sacred cause, but trembled when he rose ;
And every venal stickler for the yoke
Felt himself crushed at the first word he spoke.

Such men are raised to station and command,
When Providence means mercy to a land.
He speaks, and they appear ; to him they owe
Skill to direct, and strength to strike the blow ;
To manage with address, to seize with power
The crisis of a dark decisive hour :
So Gideon earned a victory not his own ;
Subserviency his praise, and that alone. ✕

Poor England ! thou art a devoted deer,
Beset with every ill but that of fear,
Thee nations hunt ; all mark thee for a prey ;
They swarm around thee, and thou stand'st at bay,
Undaunted still, though wearied and perplexed ;
Once Chatham saved thee ; but who saves thee next ?
Alas ! the tide of pleasure sweeps along
All that should be the boast of British song.
'Tis not the wreath that once adorned thy brow,
The prize of happier times, will serve thee now

Our ancestry, a gallant, Christian race,
~~Patterns~~^{Specimens} of every virtue, every grace,
 Confessed a God ; they kneeled before they fought,
 And praised him in the victories he wrought.
 Now from the dust of ancient days bring forth
 Their sober zeal, integrity, and worth ;
 Courage, ungraced by these, affronts the skies,
 Is but the fire without the sacrifice.
 The stream that feeds the well-spring of the heart,
 Not more invigorates life's noblest part,
 Than virtue quickens, with a warmth divine,
 The powers that sin hath brought to a decline.

✓A. The inestimable estimate of Brown
 Rose like a paper-kite, and charmed the town ;
 But measures, planned and executed well,
 Shifted the wind that raised it, and it fell.
 He trod the very self-same ground you tread,
 And victory refuted all he said. ✓

B. And yet his judgment was not framed amiss :
 Its error, if it erred, was merely this—
 He thought the dying hour already come,
 And a complete recovery struck him dumb.

But that effeminacy, folly, lust,
 Enervate and enfeeble, and needs must ;
 And that a nation shamefully debased,
 Will be despised and trampled on at last,
 Unless sweet penitence her powers renew,
 Is truth, if history itself be true.
 There is a time, and justice marks the date,
 For long-forbearing clemency to wait ;
 That hour elapsed, the incurable revolt
 Is punished, and down comes the thunderbolt.
 If Mercy then put by the threat'ning blow,
 Must she perform the same kind office now ?
 May she ! and, if offended Heaven be still
 Accessible, and prayer prevail, she will.
 'Tis not, however, insolence and noise,
 The tempest of tumultuary joys,

Nor is it yet despondence and dismay
 Will win her visits, or engage her stay ;
 Prayer only, and the penitential tear,
 Can call her smiling down, and fix her here.

But when a country (one that I could name)
 In prostitution sinks the sense of shame ;
 When infamous venality, grown bold,
 Writes on his bosom, To be let or sold ;
 When perjury, that Heaven-defying vice,
 Sells oaths by tale, and at the lowest price,
 Stamps God's own name upon a lie just made,
 To turn a penny in the way of trade ;
 When avarice starves (and never hides his face)
 Two or three millions of the human race,
 And not a tongue inquires how, where, or when,
 Though conscience will have twinges now and then :
 When profanation of the sacred cause
 In all its parts, times, ministry, and laws,
 Bespeaks a land, once Christian, fallen and lost,
 In all that wars against that title most ;
 What follows next, let cities of great name,
 And regions long since desolate, proclaim.
 Nineveh, Babylon, and ancient Rome,
 Speak to the present times, and times to come ;
 They cry aloud, in every careless ear,
 Stop, while ye may ; suspend your mad career ;
 O learn from our example and our fate,
 Learn wisdom and repentance, ere too late.

* Not only vice disposes and prepares
 The mind, that slumbers sweetly in her snares,
 To stoop to tyranny's usurped command,
 And bend her polished neck beneath his hand
 (A dire effect, by one of Nature's laws,
 Unchangeably connected with its cause) ;
 But Providence himself will intervene,
 To throw his dark displeasure o'er the scene.
 All are his instruments ; each form of war,
 What burns at home, or threatens from afar,

Nature in arms, her elements at strife,
 The storms that overset the joys of life,
 Are but his rods to scourge a guilty land,
 And waste it at the bidding of his hand.
 He gives the word, and mutiny soon roars
 In all her gates, and shakes her distant shores ;
 The standards of all nations are unfurled ;
 She has one foe, and that one foe the world.
 And if he doom that people with a frown,
 And mark them with a seal of wrath pressed down,
 Obduracy takes place ; callous and tough,
 The reprobated race grows judgment proof :
 Earth shakes beneath them, and Heaven roars above ;
 But nothing scares them from the course they love.
 To the lascivious pipe and wanton song,
 That charm down fear, they frolic it along,
 With mad rapidity and unconcern,
 Down to the gulf, from which is no return.
 They trust in navies, and their navies fail—
 God's curse can cast away ten thousand sail !
 They trust in armies, and their courage dies ;
 In wisdom, wealth, in fortune, and in lies ;
 But all they trust in withers, as it must,
 When he commands, in whom they place no trust.
 Vengeance at last pours down upon their coast,
 A long despised, but now victorious, host ;
 Tyranny sends the chain that must abridge
 The noble sweep of all their privilege ;
 Gives liberty the last, the mortal shock ;
 Slips the slave's collar on, and snaps the lock. ✕

A. Such lofty strains embellish what you teach ;
 Mean you to prophesy, or but to preach ?

B. I know the mind that feels indeed the fire
 The muse imparts, and can command the lyre,
 Acts with a force, and kindles with a zeal,
 Whate'er the theme, that others never feel.
 If human woes her soft attention claim,
 A tender sympathy pervades the frame ;

She pours a sensibility divine
 Along the nerve of every feeling line.
 But if a deed, not tamely to be borne,
 Fire indignation and a sense of scorn,
 The strings are swept with such a power, so loud,
 The storm of music shakes th' astonished crowd.
 So, when remote futurity is brought
 Before the keen inquiry of her thought,
 A terrible sagacity informs
 The poet's heart ; he looks to distant storms ;
 He hears the thunder ere the tempest lowers ;
 And, armed with strength surpassing human powers,
 Seizes events as yet unknown to man,
 And darts his soul into the dawning plan.
 Hence, in a Roman mouth, the graceful name
 Of prophet and of poet was the same ;
 Hence British poets to the priesthood shared,
 And every hallowed Druid was a bard.
 But no prophetic fires to me belong ;
 I play with syllables, and sport in song.

A. At Westminster, where little poets strive
 To set a distich upon six and five,
 Where discipline helps th' opening buds of sense,
 And makes his pupils proud with silver pence,
 I was a poet too ; but modern taste
 Is so refined, and delicate, and chaste,
 That verse, whatever fire the fancy warms,
 Without a creamy smoothness has no charms.
 Thus, all success depending on an ear,
 And thinking I might purchase it too dear,
 If sentiment were sacrificed to sound,
 And truth cut short to make a period round,
 I judged a man of sense could scarce do worse,
 Than caper in the morris-dance of verse.

B. Thus reputation is a spur to wit,
 And some wits flag through fear of losing it.
 Give me the line that ploughs its stately course
 Like a proud swan, conqu'ring the stream by force ;



That, like some cottage beauty, strikes the heart,
 Quite unindebted to the tricks of art.
 When labour and when dulness, club in hand,
 Like the two figures at St. Dunstan's, stand,
 Beating alternately, in measured time,
 The clock-work tintinabulum of rhyme,
 Exact and regular the sounds will be ; ✕
 But such mere quarter-strokes are not for me.
 ✕ From him who rears a poem lank and long,
 To him who strains his all into a song ; .
 Perhaps some bonny Caledonian air,
 All birks and braes, though he was never there ;

Or, having whelped a prologue with great pains,
 Feels himself spent, and fumbles for his brains ;
 A prologue interdashed with many a stroke—
 An art contrived to advertise a joke,
 So that the jest is clearly to be seen,
 Not in the words, but in the gap between :
 Manner is all in all, whate'er is writ,
 The substitute for genius, sense, and wit. ✓
 To dally much with subjects mean and low,
 Proves that the mind is weak, or makes it so.
 Neglected talents rust into decay,
 And every effort ends in push-pin play.
 The man that means success, should soar above
 A soldier's feather, or a lady's glove ;
 Else, summoning the muse to such a theme,
 The fruit of all her labour is whipped cream.
 As if an eagle flew aloft, and then
 Stooped from its highest pitch to pounce a wren ;
 As if the poet, purposing to wed,
 Should carve himself a wife in gingerbread.
 Ages elapsed ere Homer's lamp appeared,
 And ages ere the Mantuan swan was heard :
 To carry nature lengths unknown before,
 To give a Milton birth, asked ages more.
 Thus genius rose and set at ordered times,
 And shot a day-spring into distant climes,
 Ennobling every region that he chose ;
 He sunk in Greece, in Italy he rose ;
 And, tedious years of Gothic darkness past,
 Emerged, all splendour, in our isle at last.
 Thus lovely halcyons dive into the main,
 Then show far off their shining plumes again.

A. Is genius only found in epic lays ?
 Prove this, and forfeit all pretence to praise.
 Make their heroic praise your own at once,
 Or candidly confess yourself a dunce.

B. These were the chief : each interval of night
 Was graced with many an undulating light.

- In less illustrious bards his beauty shone
 A meteor, or a star ; in these, the sun.
 The nightingale may claim the topmost bough,
 While the poor grasshopper must chirp below.
 Like him unnoticed, I, and such as I,
 Spread little wings, and rather skip than fly :
 Perched on the meagre produce of the land,
 An ell or two of prospect we command ;
 But never peep beyond the thorny bound,
 Or oaken fence, that hems the paddock round.
- In Eden, ere yet innocence of heart
 Had faded, poetry was not an art :
 Language, above all teaching, or, if taught,
 Only by gratitude and glowing thought,
 Elegant as simplicity, and warm
 As ecstasy, unmanacled by form ;
 Not prompted, as in our degen'rate days,
 By low ambition and the thirst of praise ;
 Was natural, as is the flowing stream,
 And yet magnificent—a God the theme !
 That theme on earth exhausted, though above
 'Tis found as everlasting as his love,
 Man lavished all his thoughts on human things—
 The feats of heroes, and the wrath of kings ;
 But still, while virtue kindled his delight,
 The song was moral, and so far was right.
 'Twas thus, till luxury seduced the mind
 To joys less innocent, as less refined ;
 Then genius danced a bacchanal ; he crowned
 The brimming goblet, seized the thyrsus, bound
 His brows with ivy, rushed into the field
 Of wild imagination, and there reeled,
 The victim of his own lascivious fires,
 And, dizzy with delight, profaned the sacred wires.
 Anacreon, Horace, played in Greece and Rome
 This bedlam part ; and others nearer home.
 When Cromwell fought for power, and while he reigned
 The proud protector of the power he gained,

Religion harsh, intolerant, austere,
 Parent of manners like herself severe,
 Drew a rough copy of the Christian face,
 Without the smile, the sweetness, or the grace ;
 The dark and sullen humour of the time
 Judged every effort of the muse a crime ;
 Verse, in the finest mould of fancy cast,
 Was lumber in an age so void of taste ;
 But when the Second Charles assumed the sway,
 And arts revived beneath a softer day,
 Then, like a bow long forced into a curve,
 The mind, released from too constrained a nerve,
 Flew to its first position with a spring,
 That made the vaulted roofs of pleasure ring.
 His court, the dissolute and hateful school
 Of wantonness, where vice was taught by rule,
 Swarmed with a scribbling herd, as deep inlaid
 With brutal lust as ever Circe made.
 From these a long succession, in the rage
 Of rank obscenity, debauched their age ;
 Nor ceased, till, ever anxious to redress
 The abuses of her sacred charge, the press,
 The muse instructed a well-nurtured train
 Of abler votaries to cleanse the stain,
 And claim the palm for purity of song,
 That lewdness had usurped and worn so long
 Then decent pleasantry and sterling sense,
 That neither gave nor would endure offence,
 Whipped out of sight, with satire just and keen,
 The puppy pack that had defiled the scene.

In front of these came Addison. In him
 Humour in holiday and slightly trim,
 Sublimity and Attic taste combined,
 To polish, furnish, and delight the mind.
 Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,
 In verse well disciplined, complete, compact,
 Gave virtue and morality a grace,
 That, quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,

Table Talk.

Levied a tax of wonder and applause,
E'en on the fools that trampled on their laws.
But he (his musical finesse was such,
So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
Made poetry a mere mechanic art ;
And every warbler has his tune by heart.
Nature imparting her satiric gift,
Her serious mirth, to Arbuthnot and Swift,
With droll sobriety they raise a smile
At folly's cost, themselves unmoved the while.
That constellation set, the world in vain
Must hope to look upon their like again.

A. Are we then left ?

B. Not wholly in the dark ;
Wit now and then, struck smartly, shows a spark.
Sufficient to redeem the modern race
From total night and absolute disgrace.
While servile trick and imitative knack
Confine the million in the beaten track,
Perhaps some courser, who disdains the road,
Snuffs up the wind, and flings himself abroad.

Contemporaries all surpassed, see one ;
Short his career indeed, but ably run ;
Churchill, himself unconscious of his powers,
In penury consumed his idle hours ;
And, like a scattered seed at random sown,
Was left to spring by vigour of his own.
Lifted at length, by dignity of thought
And dint of genius, to an affluent lot,
He laid his head in luxury's soft lap,
And took, too often, there his easy nap.
If brighter beams than all he threw not forth,
'Twas negligence in him, not want of worth.
Surly, and slovenly, and bold, and coarse,
Too proud for art, and trusting in mere force,
Spendthrift alike of money and of wit,
Always at speed, and never drawing bit,

He struck the lyre in such a careless mood,
 And so disdained the rules he understood,
 The laurel seemed to wait on his command,
 He snatched it rudely from the muse's hand. †
 Nature, exerting an unwearied power,
 Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower ;
 Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads
 The dancing Naiads through the dewy meads ;
 She fills profuse ten thousand little throats
 With music, modulating all their notes ;
 And charms the woodland scenes and wilds unknown,
 With artless airs and concerts of her own ;
 But seldom (as if fearful of expense)
 Vouchsafes to man a poet's just pretence—
 Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,
 Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought ;
 Fancy, that, from the bow that spans the sky,
 Brings colours, dipped in heaven, that never die ;
 A soul exalted above earth, a mind
 Skilled in the characters that form mankind ;
 And, as the sun in rising beauty dressed,
 Looks to the westward from the dappled east,
 And marks, whatever clouds may interpose,
 Ere yet his race begins, its glorious close :
 An eye like his to catch the distant goal ;
 Or, ere the wheels of verse begin to roll,
 Like his to shed illuminating rays
 On every scene and subject it surveys :
 Thus graced, the man asserts a poet's name,
 And the world cheerfully admits the claim.
 Pity religion has so seldom found
 A skilful guide into poetic ground !
 The flowers would spring where'er she deigned to stray,
 And every muse attend her in her way.
 Virtue, indeed, meets many a rhyming friend,
 And many a compliment politely penned ;
 But, unattired in that becoming vest
 Religion weaves for her, and half undressed.

Stands in the desert, shiv'ring and forlorn,
 A wintry figure, like a withered thorn.
 The shelves are full, all other themes are sped ;
Hackneyed and worn to the last flimsy thread.
 'Satire has long since done his best ; and cursed
 And loathsome ribaldry has done his worst ;
 Fancy has sported all her powers away
 In tales, in trifles, and in children's play ;
 And 'tis the sad complaint, and almost true,
 'Whate'er we write, we bring forth nothing new.
 'Twere new, indeed, to see a bard all fire,
 Touched with a coal from heaven, assume the lyre,
 And tell the world, still kindling as he sung,
 With more than mortal music on his tongue,
 That He who died below, and reigns above,
 Inspires the song, and that his name is Love.

For, after all, if merely to beguile,
 By flowing numbers and a flowery style,
 The tedium that the lazy rich endure,
 Which now and then sweet poetry may cure :
 Or, if to see the name of idle self,
 Stamped on the well-bound quarto, grace the shelf,
 To float a bubble on the breath of fame,
 Prompt his endeavour, and engage his aim,
 Debased to servile purposes of pride,
 How are the powers of genius misapplied !
 The gift, whose office is the giver's praise,
 To trace him in his word, his works, his ways !
 Then spread the rich discovery, and invite
 Mankind to share in the divine delight :
 Distorted from its use and just design,
 To make the pitiful possessor shine,
 To purchase at the fool-frequented fair
 Of vanity a wreath for self to wear,
 Is profanation of the basest kind—
 Proof of a trifling and a worthless mind.

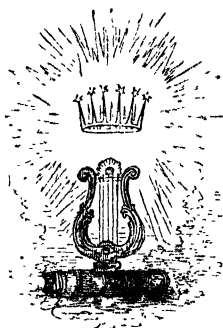
A. Hail Sternhold, then ; and, Hopkins, hail !

B. Amen.

If flattery, folly, lust, employ the pen ;
If acrimony, slander, and abuse,
Give it a charge to blacken and traduce ;
Though Butler's wit, Pope's numbers, Prior's ease,
With all that fancy can invent to please,
Adorn the polished periods as they fall,
One madrigal of theirs is worth them all.

A. 'Twould thin the ranks of the poetic tribe,
To dash the pen through all that you proscribe.

B. No matter—we could shift when they were not ;
And should, no doubt, if they were all forgot.





THE PROGRESS OF ERROR.

Si quid loquar audientum.

HOR., Lib. iv Od. 2.

SING, muse (if such a theme, so dark, so long,
May find a muse to grace it with a song),
By what unseen and unsuspected arts
The serpent Error twines round human hearts;
Tell where she lurks, beneath what flowery shades,
That not a glimpse of genuine light pervades,
The poisonous, black, insinuating worm,
Successfully conceals her loathsome form.
Take, if ye can, ye careless and supine,
Counsel and caution from a voice like mine!
Truths, that the theorist could never reach,
And observation taught me, I would teach.

Not all, whose eloquence the fancy fills,
Musical as the chime of tinkling rills,
Weak to perform, though mighty to pretend,
Can trace her mazy windings to their end;
Discern the fraud beneath the specious lure,
Prevent the danger, or prescribe the cure.
The clear harangue, and cold as it is clear,
Falls soporific on the listless ear;
Like quicksilver, tho rhetoric they display
Shines as it runs, but, grasped at, slips away.

Placed for his trial on this bustling stage,
From thoughtless youth to ruminating age,
Free in his will to choose or to refuse,
Man may improve the crisis, or abuse;

Else, on the fatalist's unrighteous plan,
Say to what bar amenable were man?
With nought in charge he could betray no trust;
And, if he fell, would fall because he must;
If love reward him, or if vengeance strike,
His recompense in both unjust alike.
Divine authority within his breast
Brings every thought, word, action, to the test;
Warns him or prompts, approves him or restrains,
As reason, or as passion, takes the reins.
Heaven from above, and conscience from within,
Cries in his startled ear—Abstain from sin!
The world around solicits his desire,
And kindles in his soul a treacherous fire;
While, all his purposes and steps to guard,
Peace follows virtue as its sure reward;
And pleasure brings as surely in her train
Remorse, and sorrow, and vindictive pain.

Man, thus endued with an elective voice,
Must be supplied with objects of his choice.
Where'er he turns, enjoyment and delight,
Or present, or in prospect, meet his sight:
Those open on the spot their honeyed store;
These call him loudly to pursuit of more.
His unexhausted mine the sordid vice
Avarice shows, and virtue is the price.
Here various motives his ambition raise—
Power, pomp, and splendour, and the thirst of praise;
There beauty woos him with expanded arms;
E'en bacchanalian madness has its charms.

Nor these alone, whose pleasures less refined
Might well alarm the most unguarded mind,
Seek to supplant his inexperienced youth,
Or lead him devious from the path of truth;
Hourly allurements on his passions press,
Safe in themselves, but dangerous in the excess.

Hark! how it floats upon the dewy air!
O what a dying, dying close was there!

'Tis harmony from yon sequestered bower,
Sweet harmony, that soothes the midnight hour !
Long ere the charioteer of day had run
His morning course, the enchantment was begun ;
And he shall gild yon mountain's height again,
Ere yet the pleasing toil becomes a pain.



Is this the rugged path, the steep ascent,
That virtue points to ? Can a life thus spent
Lead to the bliss she promises the wise,
Detach the soul from earth, and speed her to the skies ?

Ye devotees to your adored employ,
Enthusiasts, drunk with an unreal joy,
Love makes the music of the blest above,
Heaven's harmony is universal love ;
And earthly sounds, though sweet and well combined,
And lenient as soft opiates to the mind,
Leave vice and folly unsubdued behind.



Gray dawn appears: the sportsman and his train
Speckle the bosom of the distant plain ;
'Tis he, the Nimrod of the neighbouring lairs ;
Save that his scent is less acute than theirs,
For persevering chase, and headlong leaps,
True beagle as the stanchest hound he keeps,
Charged with the folly of his life's mad scene,
He takes offence, and wonders what you mean ;
The joy, the danger, and the toil o'erpays—
'Tis exercise, and health, and length of days.

Again impetuous to the field he flies ;
Leaps every fence but one, there falls, and dies ;
Like a slain deer, the tumbrel brings him home,
Unmissed but by his dogs and by his groom.

Ye clergy, while your orbit is your place,
Lights of the world, and stars of human race ;
But if, eccentric, ye forsake your sphere,
Prodigies ominous, and viewed with fear ;
The comet's baneful influence is a dream ;
Yours real, and pernicious in the extreme.
What then ?—are appetites and lusts laid down
With the same ease that man puts on his gown ?
Will avarice and concupiscence give place,
Charmed by the sounds—Your reverence, or, Your grace !
No. But his own engagement binds him fast ;
Or, if it does not, brands him to the last,
What atheists call him—a designing knave,
A mere church juggler, hypocrite, and slave.
Oh, laugh or mourn with me the rueful jest,
A cassocked huntsman, and a fiddling priest !
He from Italian songsters takes his cue :
Set Paul to music, he shall quote him too.
He takes the field, the master of the pack,
Cries—Well done, saint ! and claps him on the back
Is this the path of sanctity ? Is this
To stand a waymark in the road to bliss ?
Himself a wanderer from the narrow way,
His silly sheep, what wonder if they stray !
Go, cast your orders at your bishop's feet,
Send your dishonoured gown to Monmouth Street !
The sacred function in your hands is made—
Sad sacrilege !—no function, but a trade !

Occiduus is a pastor of renown,
When he has prayed and preached the Sabbath down.
With wire and catgut he concludes the day,
Quavering and semiquavering care away.
The full concerto swells upon your ear ;
All elbows shake. Look in, and you would swear

The Babylonian tyrant, with a nod,
 Had summoned them to serve his golden god.
 So well that thought the employment seems to suit,
 Psaltery and sackbut, dulcimer and flute.
 O fie ! 'tis evangelical and pure :
 Observe each face, how sober and demure !
 Ecstasy sets her stamp on every mien ;
 Chins fallen, and not an eyeball to be seen.
 Still I insist, though music heretofore
 Has charmed me much (not e'en Occiduus more),
 Love, joy, and peace make harmony more meet
 For Sabbath evenings, and perhaps as sweet.

Will not the sickliest sheep of every flock
 Resort to this example as a rock ;
 There stand, and justify the foul abuse
 Of Sabbath hours with plausible excuse ;
 If apostolic gravity be free
 To play the fool on Sundays, why not we ?
 If he the tinkling harpsichord regards
 As inoffensive, what offence in cards ?
 Strike up the fiddles, let us all be gay !
 Laymen have leave to dance, if parsons play.

O Italy !—Thy Sabbaths will be soon
 Our Sabbaths, closed with mummary and buffoon.
 Preaching and pranks will share the motley scene,
 Ours parcelled out, as thine have ever been,
 God's worship and the mountebank between.
 What says the prophet ? Let that day be blest
 With holiness and consecrated rest.
 Pastime and business both it should exclude,
 And bar the door the moment they intrude ;
 Nobly distinguished above all the six
 By deeds in which the world must never mix.
 Hear him again : He calls it a delight,
 A day of luxury, observed aright,
 When the glad soul is made Heaven's welcome guest,
 Sits banqueting, and God provides the feast.

But triflers are engaged and cannot come ;
Their answer to the call is—Not at home.

O the dear pleasures of the velvet plain,
The painted tablets, dealt and dealt again !
Cards, with what rapture, and the polished die,
The yawning chasm of indolence supply !



Then to the dance, and make the sober moon
Witness of joys that shun the sight of noon.
Blame, cynic, if you can, quadrille or ball,
The snug close party, or the splendid hall,
Where night, down stooping from her obon throne,
Views constellations brighter than her own.
'Tis innocent, and harmless, and refined,
The balm of care, Elysium of the mind.
Innocent ! Oh, if venerable Time
Slain at the foot of pleasure be no crime,
Then with his silver beard and magic wand,
Let Comus rise archbishop of the land ;

Let him your rubric and your feasts prescribe,
Grand metropolitan of all the tribe.

Of manners rough, and coarse athletic cast,
The rank debauch suits Clodio's filthy taste.

Rufillus, exquisitely formed by rule,

Not of the moral but the dancing school,

Wonders at Clodio's follies, in a tone

As tragical, as others at his own.

He cannot drink five bottles, bilk the score,

Then kill a constable, and drink five more;

But he can draw a pattern, make a tart,

And has the ladies' etiquette by heart.

Go, fool ! and, arm in arm with Clodio, plead

Your cause before a bar you little dread ;

But know the law that bids the drunkard die,

Is far too just to pass the trifler by.

Both baby-featured, and of infant size,

Viewed from a distance, and with heedless eyes,

Folly and innocence are so alike,

The difference, though essential, fails to strike.

Yet folly ever has a vacant stare,

A simpering countenance, and a trifling air ;

But innocence, sedate, serene, erect,

Delights us by engaging our respect.

Man, Nature's guest by invitation sweet,

Receives from her both appetite and treat ;

But, if he play the glutton, and exceed,

His benefactress blushes at the deed,

For Nature, nice as liberal to dispense,

Made nothing but a brute the slave of sense.

Daniel ate pulse by choice—example rare !

Heaven blessed the youth, and made him fresh and fair.

Gorgonius sits, abdominous and wan,

Like a fat squab upon a Chinese fan :

He snuffs far off the anticipated joy ;

Turtle and venison all his thoughts employ ;

Prepares for meals as jockeys take a sweat,

Oh, nauseous!—an emetic for a whet !

Will Providence o'erlook the wasted good ?
Temperance were no virtue if he could.

That pleasures, therefore, or what such we call,
Are hurtful, is a truth confessed by all.
And some, that seem to threaten virtue less,
Still hurtful in the abuse, or by the excess.

Is man then only for his torment placed
The centre of delights he may not taste ?
Like fabled Tantalus, condemned to hear
The precious stream still purling in his ear,
Lip-deep in what he longs for, and yet curst
With prohibition and perpetual thirst ?
No, wrangler, destitute of shame and sense,
The precept, that enjoins him abstinence,
Forbids him none but the licentious joy,
Whose fruit, though fair, tempts only to destroy.
Remorse, the fatal egg by pleasure laid
In every bosom where her nest is made,
Hatched by the beams of truth, denies him rest,
And proves a raging scorpion in his breast.
No pleasure ! Are domestic comforts dead ?
Are all the nameless sweets of friendship fled ?
Has time worn out, or fashion put to shame,
Good sense, good health, good conscience, and good fame ?
All these belong to virtue, and all prove
That virtue has a title to your love.
Have you no touch of pity, that the poor
Stand starved at your inhospitable door ?
Or if yourself, too scantily supplied,
Need help, let honest industry provide.
Earn, if you want ; if you abound, impart :
These both are pleasures to the feeling heart.
No pleasure ! Has some sickly eastern waste
Sent us a wind to parch us at a blast ?
Can British paradise no scenes afford
To please her sated and indifferent lord ?
Are sweet philosophy's enjoyments run
Quite to the lees ? And has religion none ?

Brutes capable would tell you 'tis a lie,
And judge you from the kennel and the sty.
Delights like these, ye sensual and profane,
Ye are bid, begged, besought to entertain ;
Called to these crystal streams, do ye turn off
Obscene to swill and swallow at a trough !
Envy the beast then, on whom Heaven bestows
Your pleasures, with no curses at the close.

Pleasure admitted in undue degree,
Enslaves the will, nor leaves the judgment free.
'Tis not alone the grape's enticing juice
Unnerves the moral powers, and mars their use ;
Ambition, avarice, and the lust of fame,
And woman, lovely woman, does the same ;
The heart surrendered to the ruling power
Of some ungoverned passion every hour,
Finds by degrees the truths that once bore sway,
And all their deep impressions, wear away ;
So coin grows smooth, in traffic current passed,
Till Cæsar's image is effaced at last.

The breach, though small at first, soon opening wide,
In rushes folly with a full-moon tide,
Then welcome errors, of whatever size,
To justify it by a thousand lies.
As creeping ivy clings to wood or stone,
And hides the ruin that it feeds upon ;
So sophistry cleaves close to and protects
Sin's rotten trunk, concealing its defects.
Mortals, whose pleasures are their only care,
First wish to be imposed on, and then are.
And, lest the fulsome artifice should fail,
Themselves will hide its coarseness with a veil.
Not more industrious are the just and true,
To give to virtue what is virtue's due—
The praise of wisdom, comeliness, and worth,
And call her charms to public notice forth—
Than vice's mean and disingenuous race,
To hide the shocking features of her face.

Her form with dress and lotion they repair ;
Then kiss their idol, and pronounce her fair.

The sacred implement I now employ
Might prove a mischief, or at best a toy ;
A trifle, if it move but to amuse ;
But, if to wrong the judgment and abuse,
Worse than a poniard in the basest hand,
It stabs at once the morals of a land.

Ye writers of what none with safety reads,
Footing it in the dance that fancy leads ;
Ye novelists, who mar what ye would mend,
Snivelling and drivelling folly without end ;
Whose corresponding misses fill the ream
With sentimental frippery and dream,
Caught in a delicate soft silken net
By some lewd earl, or rakehell baronet :
Ye pimps who, under virtue's fair pretence,
Steal to the closet of young innocence,
And teach her, unexperienced yet and green,
To scribble as you scribbled at fifteen ;
Who, kindling a combustion of desire,
With some cold moral think to quench the fire ;
Though all your engineering proves in vain,
The dribbling stream ne'er puts it out again :
O that a verse had power, and could command
Far, far away, these flesh-flies of the land,
Who fasten without mercy on the fair,
And suck, and leave a craving maggot there !
Howe'er disguised the inflammatory tale,
And covered with a fine-spun specious veil ;
Such writers, and such readers, owe the gust
And relish of their pleasures all to lust.

But the muse, eagle-pinioned, has in view
A quarry more important still than you ;
Down, down the wind she swims, and sails away,
Now stoops upon it, and now grasps the prey.

Petronius ! all the muses weep for thee ;
But every tear shall scald thy memory :

The graces, too, while virtue at their shrine
Lay bleeding under that soft hand of thine,
Felt each a mortal stab in her own breast,
Abhorred the sacrifice, and cursed the priest.
Thou polished and high-finished foe to truth,
Greybeard corrupter of our listening youth,
To purge and skim away the filth of vice,
That so refined it might the more entice,
Then pour it on the morals of thy son,
To taint his heart was worthy of thine own !
Now, while the poison all high life pervades,
Write, if thou canst, one letter from the shades,
One, and one only, charged with deep regret,
That thy worst part, thy principles, live yet ;
One sad epistle thence may cure mankind
Of the plague spread by bundles left behind.
'Tis granted, and no plainer truth appears—
Our most important are our earliest years ;
The mind, impressible and soft, with ease
Imbibes and copies what she hears and sees,
And through life's labyrinth holds fast the clue
That education gives her, false or true.
Plants raised with tenderness are seldom strong ;
Man's coltish disposition asks the thong ;
And without discipline the favourite child,
Like a neglected forester, runs wild.
But we, as if good qualities would grow
Spontaneous, take but little pains to sow ;
We give some Latin, and a smatch of Greek ;
Teach him to fence and figure twice a-week ;
And having done, we think, the best we can,
Praise his proficiency, and dub him man.

From school to Cam or Isis, and thence home ;
And thence with all convenient speed to Rome,
With reverend tutor, clad in habit lay,
To tease for cash, and quarrel with all day ;
With memorandum book for every town,
And every post, and where the chaise broke down ;



His stock, a few French phrases got by heart,
With much to learn, but nothing to impart.
The youth, obedient to his sire's commands,
Sets off a wanderer into foreign lands.
Surprised at all they meet, the gosling pair,
With awkward gait, stretched neck, and silly stare,
Discover huge cathedrals built with stone,
And steeples tow'ring high, much like our own ;
But show peculiar light by many a grin
At popish practices observed within.

Ere long some bowing, smirking, smart ablé
 Remarks two loiterers that have lost their way ;
 And, being always primed with politesse
 For men of their appearance and address,
 With much compassion undertakes the task
 To tell them more than they have wit to ask ;
 Points to inscriptions whereso'er they tread,
Such as, when legible, were never read,
But being cankered now and half worn out,
Craze antiquarian brains with endless doubt ;
Some headless hero, or some Cæsar shows—
 Defective only in his Roman nose ;
 Exhibits elevations, drawings, plans,
 Models of Herculean pots and pans ;
 And sells them medals, which, if neither rare
 Nor ancient, will be so preserved with care.

Strange the recital ! from whatever cause
 His great improvement and new light he draws.
 The squire, once bashful, is shamefaced no more,
 But teems with powers he never felt before ;
 Whether increased momentum, and the force
 With which from clime to clime he sped his course
 (As axles sometimes kindle as they go),
 Chafed him, and brought dull nature to a glow ;
 Or whether clearer skies and softer air,
 That make Italian flowers so sweet and fair,
 Freshening his lazy spirits ~~as~~ he ran,
 Unfolded genially, and spread the man ;
 Returning, he proclaims, by many a grace,
 By shrugs and strange contortions of his face,
 How much a dunce that has been sent to roam,
 Excels a dunce that has been kept at home.

Accomplishments have taken virtue's place,
 And wisdom falls before exterior grace :
 We slight the precious kernel of the stone,
 And toil to polish its rough coat alone.
 A just deportment, manners graced with ease,
 Elegant phrase, and figure formed to please,

Are qualities that seem to comprehend
Whatever parents, guardians, schools, intend ;
Hence an unfurnished and a listless mind,
Though busy, trifling ; empty, though refined ;
Hence all that interferes, and dares to clash
With indolence and luxury, is trash ;
While learning, once the man's exclusive pride,
Seems verging fast towards the female side.
Learning itself, received into a mind
By nature weak, or viciously inclined,
Serves but to lead philosophers astray,
Where children would with ease discern the way.
And of all arts sagacious dupes invent,
To cheat themselves and gain the world's assent,
The worst is—Scripture warped from its intent.

The carriage bowls along, and all are pleased
If Tom be sober, and the wheels well greased ;
But if the rogue be gone a cup too far,
Left out his linchpin, or forgot his tar,
It suffers interruption and delay,
And meets with hindrance in the smoothest way.
When some hypothesis absurd and vain
Has filled with all its fumes a critic's brain,
The text that sorts not with his darling whim,
Though plain to others, is obscure to him.
The will made subject to a lawless force,
All is irregular, and out of course ;
And judgment drunk, and bribed to lose his way,
Winks hard, and talks of darkness at noonday.

A critic on the sacred book should be
Candid and learned, dispassionate and free :
Free from the wayward bias bigots feel,
From fancy's influence, and intemperate zeal ;
But above all (or let the wretch refrain,
Nor touch the page he cannot but profane),
Free from the domineering power of lust ;
A lewd interpreter is never just.

How shall I speak thee, or thy power address,
Thou God of our idolatry, the press !
By thee religion, liberty, and laws,
Exert their influence and advance their cause :
By thee worse plagues than Pharaoh's land befall,
Diffused, make earth the vestibule of hell ;
Thou fountain, at which drink the good and wise ;
Thou ever bubbling spring of endless lies ;
Like Eden's dread probationary tree,
Knowledge of good and evil is from thee.

No wild enthusiast ever yet could rest
Till half mankind were like himself possessed.
Philosophers, who darken and put out
Eternal truth by everlasting doubt ;
Church quacks, with passions under no command,
Who fill the world with doctrines contraband,
Discoverers of they know not what, confined
Within no bounds—the blind that lead the blind ;
To streams of popular opinion drawn,
Deposit in those shallows all their spawn.
The wriggling fry soon fill the creeks around,
Poisoning the waters where their swarms abound.
Scorned by the nobler tenants of the flood,
Minnows and gudgeons gorge the unwholesome food.
The propagated myriads spread so fast,
E'en Leuwenhoeck himself would stand aghast,
Employed to calculate the enormous sum,
And own his crab-computing powers o'ercome.
Is this hyperbole ? The world well known,
Your sober thoughts will hardly find it one.

Fresh confidence the speculatist takes
From every hair-brained proselyte he makes ;
And therefore prints : himself but half deceived,
Till others have the soothing tale believed.
Hence comment after comment spun as fine
As bloated spiders draw the flimsy line.
Hence the same word that bids our lusts obey,
Is misapplied to sanctify their sway.

If stubborn Greek refuse to be his friend,
Hebrew or Syriac shall be forced to bend ;
If languages and copies all cry, No—
Somebody proved it centuries ago.
Like trout pursued, the critic in despair
Darts to the mud, and finds his safety there :
Women, whom custom has forbid to fly
The scholar's pitch (the scholar best knows why),
With all the simple and unlettered poor,
Admire his learning, and almost adore.
Whoever errs, the priest can ne'er be wrong,
With such fine words familiar to his tongue.

Ye ladies! (for, indifferent in your cause,
I should deserve to forfeit all applause)
Whatever shocks or gives the least offence
To virtue, delicacy, truth, or sense
(Try the criterion, 'tis a faithful guide),
Nor has, nor can have, Scripture on its side.

None but an author knows an author's cares,
Or fancy's fondness for the child she bears.
Committed once into the public arms,
The baby seems to smile with added charms.
Like something precious ventured far from shore,
'Tis valued for the danger's sake the more.
He views it with complacency supreme,
Solicits kind attention to his dream ;
And daily, more enamoured of the cheat,
Kneels, and asks Heaven to bless the dear deceit.
So one, whose story serves at least to show
Men loved their own productions long ago,
Wooded an unfeeling statue for his wife,
Nor rested till the gods had given it life.
If some mere driveller suck the sugared rib,
One that still needs his leading-string and fib,
And praise his genius, he is soon repaid
In praise applied to the same part—his head ;
For 'tis a rule that holds for ever true,
Grant me discernment, and I grant it you.

Patient of contradiction as a child,
 Affable, humble, diffident, and mild;
 Such was Sir Isaac, and such Boyle and Locke;
 Your blunderer is as sturdy as a rock.
 The creature is so sure to kick and bite,
 A muleteer's the man to set him right.
 First appetite enlists him truth's sworn foe,
 Then obstinate self-will confirms him so.
 Tell him he wanders; that his error leads
 To fatal ills; that, though the path he treads
 Be flowery, and he see no cause of fear,
 Death and the pains of hell attend him there:
 In vain; the slave of arrogance and pride,
 He has no hearing on the prudent side.
 His still refuted quirks he still repeats;
 New raised objections with new quibbles meets:
 Till, sinking in the quicksand he defends,
 He dies disputing, and the contest ends—
 But not the mischiefs; they, still left behind,
 Like thistle-seeds, are sown by every wind.

Thus men go wrong with an ingenious skill;
 Bend the straight rule to their own crooked will;
 And with a clear and shining lamp supplied,
 First put it out, then take it for a guide.
 Halting on crutches of unequal size,
 One leg by truth supported, one by lies;
 They sidle to the goal with awkward pace,
 Secure of nothing but to lose the race.

Faults in the life breed errors in the brain,
 And these reciprocally those again.
 The mind and conduct mutually imprint
 And stamp their image in each other's mint;
 Each sire and dam, of an infernal race,
 Begetting and conceiving all that's base.

None sends his arrow to the mark in view,
 Whose hand is feeble, or his aim untrue.
 For though, ere yet the shaft is on the wing,
 Or when it first forsakes the elastic string,

It err but little from the intended line,
It falls at last far wide of his design ;
So he who seeks a mansion in the sky,
Must watch his purpose with a steadfast eye ;
That prize belongs to none but the sincere,
The least obliquity is fatal here.

With caution taste the sweet Circean cup ;
He that sips often at last drinks it up.
Habits are soon assumed ; but when we strive
To strip them off, 'tis being flayed alive.
Called to the temple of impure delight,
He that abstains, and he alone, does right.
If a wish wander that way, call it home ;
He cannot long be safe whose wishes roam.
But if you pass the threshold, you are caught ;
Die then, if power Almighty save you not.
There hardening by degrees, till double steeled,
Take leave of nature's God, and God revealed ;
Then laugh at all you trembled at before ;
And, joining the freethinkers' brutal roar,
Swallow the two grand nostrums they dispense—
That Scripture lies, and blasphemy is sense.
If clemency revolted by abuse
Be damnable, then damned without excuse.

Some dream that they can silence, when they will,
The storm of passion, and say—Peace, be still :
But, " Thus far and no farther," when addressed
To the wild wave, or wilder human breast,
Implies authority that never can,
That never ought to be the lot of man.

But, muse, forbear ; long flights forebode a fall ;
Strike on the deep-toned chord the sum of all.

Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies !
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies ;
And he that will be cheated to the last,
Delusions strong as hell shall bind him fast.
But if the wanderer his mistake discern,
Judge his own ways, and sigh for a return,

Bewildered once, must he bewail his loss
For ever and for ever ! No—the cross !
There and there only (though the deist rave,
And atheist, if earth bear so base a slave ;)
There and there only is the power to save.
There no delusive hope invites despair ;
No mockery meets you, no deception there.
The spells and charms that blinded you before,
All vanish there, and fascinate no more.

I am no preacher, let this hint suffice—
The cross, once seen, is death to every vice ;
Else he that hung there suffer'd all his pain,
Bled, groaned, and agonized, and died in vain.





TRUTH.

Pensantur trutinæ.—HOR., *Lib. ii. Ep. 1.*

MAN, on the dubious waves of error tossed,
His ship half foundered, and his compass lost,
Sees, far as human optics may command,
A sleeping fog, and fancies it dry land ;
Spreads all his canvass, every sinew plies ;
Pants for it, aims at it, enters it, and dies :
Then farewell all self-satisfying schemes,
His well-built systems, philosophic dreams ;
Deceitful views of future bliss, farewell !—
He reads his sentence at the flames of hell.

Hard lot of man—to toil for the reward
Of virtue, and yet lose it !—Wherefore hard !
He that would win the race must guide his horse
Obedient to the customs of the course ;
Else, though unequalled to the goal he flies,
A meaner than himself shall gain the prize.
Grace leads the right way : if you chose the wrong,
Take it and perish ; but restrain your tongue ;
Charge not, with light sufficient and left free,
Your wilful suicide on God's decree.

O how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan !
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile ;
From ostentation, as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.



Inscribed above the portal, from afar,
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words—BELIEVE AND LIVE.
Too many, shocked at what should charm them most,
Despise the plain direction, and are lost.
Heaven on such terms! (they cry with proud disdain)
Incredible, impossible, and vain!—
Rebel, because 'tis easy to obey;
And scorn, for its own sake, the gracious way.

These are the sober, in whose cooler brains
Some thought of immortality remains ;
The rest, too busy or too gay to wait
On the sad theme, their everlasting state,
Sport for a day, and perish in a night ;
The foam upon the waters not so light.

Who judged the Pharisee ? What odious cause
Exposed him to the vengeance of the laws ?
Had he seduced a virgin, wronged a friend,
Or stabbed a man to serve some private end ?
Was blasphemy his sin ? Or did he stray
From the strict duties of the sacred day ?
Sit long and late at the carousing board ?
(Such were the sins with which he charged his Lord.)
No—the man's morals were exact—what then ?
'Twas his ambition to be seen of men ;
His virtues were his pride ; and that one vice
Made all his virtues gowgaws of no price ;
He wore them as fine trappings for a show,
A praying, synagogue-frequenting beau.

The self-applauding bird, the peacock, see—
Mark what a sumptuous Pharisee is he !
Meridian sunbeams tempt him to unfold
His radiant glories, azure, green, and gold :
He treads as if, some solemn music near,
His measured step were governed by his ear ;
And seems to say—Ye meaner fowl, give place,
I am all splendour, dignity, and grace !

Not so the pheasant on his charms presumes,
Though he too has a glory in his plumes.
He, Christian-like, retreats with modest mien
To the close copse, or far sequestered green,
And shines without desiring to be seen.
The plea of works, as arrogant and vain,
Heaven turns from with abhorrence and disdain ;
Not more affronted by avowed neglect,
Than by the mere dissembler's feigned respect.

What is all righteousness that men devise?
What—but a sordid bargain for the skies?
But Christ as soon would abdicate his own,
As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne.
His dwelling a recess in some rude rock ;
Book, beads, and maple dish, his meagre stock ;



In shirt of hair and weeds of canvass dressed,
Girt with a bell-rope that the pope has blessed ;
Adust with stripes told out for every crime,
And sore tormented long before his time ;
His prayer transferred to saints that cannot aid ;
His praise postponed, and never to be paid ;
See the sage hermit, by mankind admired,
With all that bigotry adopts inspired,
Wearing out life in his religious whim,
Till his religious whimsy wears out him.
His works, his abstinence, his zeal allowed,
You think him humble—God accounts him proud.

High in demand, though lowly in pretence,
Of all his conduct this the genuine sense—
My penitential stripes, my streaming blood,
Have purchased heaven, and prove my title good.

Turn eastward now, and fancy shall apply
To your weak sight her telescopic eye.
The Brahmin kindles on his own bare head
The sacred fire, self-torturing his trade!
His voluntary pains, severe and long,
Would give a barbarous air to British song;
No grand inquisitor could worse invent,
Than he contrives to suffer, well content.

Which is the saintlier worthy of the two?
Past all dispute, yon anchorite, say you.
Your sentence and mine differ. What's a name,
I say the Brahmin has the fairer claim.
If sufferings, Scripture nowhere recommends,
Devised by self to answer selfish ends,
Give saintship, then all Europe must agree
Ten starveling hermits suffer less than he.

The truth is (if the truth may suit your ear,
And prejudice have left a passage clear),
Pride has attained its most luxuriant growth,
And poisoned every virtue in them both.
Pride may be pampered while the flesh grows lean;
Humility may clothe an English dean;
That grace was Cowper's—his, confessed by all—
Though placed in golden Durham's second stall.
Not all the plenty of a bishop's board,
His palace, and his lacqueys, and "My lord,"
More nourish pride, that condescending vice,
Than abstinence, and beggary, and lice;
It thrives in misery, and abundant grows:
In misery fools upon themselves impose.

But why before us Protestants produce
An Indian mystic, or a French recluse?
Their sin is plain; but what have we to fear,
Reformed and well instructed? You shall hear.

Yon ancient prude, whose withered features show
 She might be young some forty years ago,
 Her elbows pinioned close upon her hips,
 Her head erect, her fan upon her lips,
 Her eyebrows arched, her eyes both gone astray
 To watch yon amorous couple in their play,
 With bony and unkerchiefed neck defies
 The rude inclemency of wintry skies,
 And sails with lappet head and mincing airs
 Duly at clink of bell to morning prayers.
 To thrift and parsimony much inclined,
 Yet she allows herself that boy behind ;
 The shivering urchin, bending as he goes,
 With slipshod heels, and dewdrop at his nose,
 His predecessor's coat advanced to wear,
 Which future pages yet are doomed to share.
 Carries her Bible tuck'd beneath his arm,
 And hides his hands to keep his fingers warm.

She, half an angel in her own account,
 Doubts not hereafter with the saints to mount,
 Though not a grace appears on strictest search,
 But that she fasts, and, item, goes to church.
 Conscious of age, she recollects her youth,
 And tells, not always with an eye to truth,
 Who spanned her waist, and who, where'er he came,
 Scrawled upon glass Miss Bridget's lovely name ;
 Who stole her slipper, filled it with tokay,
 And drank the little bumper every day.
 Of temper as envenomed as an asp,
 Censorious, and her every word a wasp :
 In faithful memory she records the crimes,
 Or real, or fictitious, of the times ;
 Laughs at the reputations she has torn,
 And holds them dangling at arm's length in scorn.

Such are the fruits of sanctimonious pride,
 Of malice fed while flesh is mortified :
 Take, madam, the reward of all your prayers,
 Where hermits and where Brahmins meet with theirs ;

Your portion is with them.—Nay, never frown,
But, if you please, some fathoms lower down.

Artist, attend—your brushes and your paint—
Produce them—take a chair—now draw a saint.
Oh sorrowful and sad! the streaming tears
Channel her checks—a Niobe appears!
Is this a saint? Throw tints and all away—
True piety is cheerful as the day;
Will weep, indeed, and heave a pitying groan
For others' woes, but smiles upon her own.

What purpose has the King of saints in view?
Why falls the Gospel like a gracious dew?
To call up plenty from the teeming earth,
Or curse the desert with a tenfold dearth?
Is it that Adam's offspring may be saved
From servile fear, or be the more enslaved?
To loose the links that galled mankind before,
Or bind them faster on, and add still more?
The freeborn Christian has no chains to prove,
Or, if a chain, the golden one of love:
No fear attends to quench his glowing fires,
What fear he feels his gratitude inspires.
Shall he, for such deliverance freely wrought,
Recompense ill? He trembles at the thought.
His Master's interest and his own combined
Prompt every movement of his heart and mind:
Thought, word, and deed, his liberty evince,
His freedom is the freedom of a prince.

Man's obligations infinite, of course
His life should prove that he receives their force;
His utmost he can render, but small—
The principle and motive all in all.
You have two servants—Tom, an arch, sly rogue,
From top to toe the Geta now in vogue,
Genteel in figure, easy in address,
Moves without noise, and swift as an express,
Reports a message with a pleasing grace,
Expert in all the duties of his place;

Say, on what hinge does his obedience move?
 Has he a world of gratitude and love?
 No, not a spark—'tis all mere sharper's play;
 He likes your house, your housemaid, and your pay;
 Reduce his wages, or get rid of her,
 Tom quits you, with—Your most obedient, sir.

The dinner served, Charles takes his usual stand,
 Watches your eye, anticipates command;
 Sighs if perhaps your appetite should fail;
 And if he but suspects a frown, turns pale;
 Consults all day your interest and your ease,
 Richly rewarded if he can but please;
 And, proud to make his firm attachment known,
 To save your life would nobly risk his own.

Now which stands highest in your serious thought?
 Charles, without doubt, say you—and so he ought;
 One act, that from a thankful heart proceeds,
 Excels ten thousand mercenary deeds.

Thus Heaven approves as honest and sincere
 The work of generous love and filial fear;
 But with averted eyes the omniscient Judge
 Scorns the base hireling, and the slavish drudge.

Where dwell these matchless saints? old Curio cries,
 E'en at your side, sir, and before your eyes,
 The favour'd few—the enthusiasts you despise.
 And pleased at heart because on holy ground
 Sometimes a canting hypocrite is found,
 Reproach a people with his single fall,
 And cast his filthy raiment at them all.
 Attend! an apt similitude shall show
 Whence springs the conduct that offends you so.

See where it smokes along the sounding plain,
 Blown all aslant, a diving, dashing rain,
 Peal upon peal redoubling all around,
 Shakes it again and faster to the ground;
 Now flashing wide, now glancing as in play,
 Swift beyond thought the lightnings dart away.

Ere yet it came the traveller urged his steed,
And hurried, but with unsuccessful speed ;
Now drenched throughout, and hopeless of his case,
He drops the rein, and leaves him to his pace,



Suppose, unlooked-for in a scene so rude,
Long hid by interposing hill or wood,
Some mansion, neat and elegantly dressed,
By some kind hospitable heart possessed,
Offer him warmth, security, and rest ;
Think with what pleasure, safe and at his ease,
He hears the tempest howling in the trees ;
What glowing thanks his lips and heart employ,
While danger past is turned to present joy.
So fares it with the sinner, when he feels
A growing dread of vengeance at his heels :
His conscience, like a glassy lake before,
Lashed into foaming waves begins to roar ;
The law grown clamorous, though silent long,
Arraigns him, charges him with every wrong,

Asserts the rights of his offended Lord ;
And death or restitution is the word :
The last impossible, he fears the first,
And, having well deserved, expects the worst.
Then welcome refuge, and a peaceful home ;
O for a shelter from the wrath to come !
Crush me, ye rocks ; ye falling mountains, hide,
Or bury me in ocean's angry tide !
The scrutiny of those all-seeing eyes
I dare not—And you need not, God replies ;
The remedy you want I freely give ;
The Book shall teach you—read, believe, and live !
'Tis done—the raging storm is heard no more,
Mercy receives him on her peaceful shore :
And justice, guardian of the dread command,
Drops the red vengeance from his willing hand.
A soul redeemed demands a life of praise ;
Hence the complexion of his future days,
Hence a demeanour holy and unspecked,
And the world's hatred, as its sure effect.

Some lead a life unblamable and just,
Their own dear virtue their unshaken trust :
They never sin—or if (as all offend)
Some trivial slips their daily walk attend,
The poor are near at hand, the charge is small,
A slight gratuity atones for all.
For though the Pope has lost his interest here,
And pardons are not sold as once they were,
No papist more desirous to compound,
Than some grave sinners upon English ground.
That plea refuted, other quirks they seek—
Mercy is infinite, and man is weak ;
The future shall obliterate the past,
And heaven, no doubt, shall be their home at last.
Come, then—a still, small whisper in your ear—
He has no hope who never had a fear ;
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.

The path to bliss abounds with many a snare ;
 Learning is one, and wit, however rare.
 The Frenchman, first in literary fame,
 (Mention him if you please. Voltaire?—The same.)
 With spirit, genius, eloquence, supplied,
 Lived long, wrote much, laughed heartily, and died ;
 The Scripture was his jest-book, whence he drew
 Bon-mots to gall the Christian and the Jew ;
 An infidel in health, but what when sick ?
 Oh—then a text would touch him at the quick :
 View him at Paris in his last career :
 Surrounding throngs the demigod revere ;
 Exalted on his pedestal of pride,
 And fumed with frankincense on every side,
 He begs their flattery with his latest breath,
 And, smothered in't at last, is praised to death.

Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
 Pillow and bobbins all her little store,
 Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
 Shuffling her threads about the livelong day,
 Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
 Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light ;
 She, for her humble sphere by nature fit,
 Has little understanding and no wit,
 Receives no praise ; but though her lot be such
 (Toilsome and indigent), she renders much ;
 Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
 A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew ;
 And in that charter reads, with sparkling eyes,
 Her title to a treasure in the skies.
 Oh, happy peasant ! Oh, unhappy bard !
 His the more tinsel, hers the rich reward ;
 He, praised perhaps for ages yet to come ;
 She, never heard of half a mile from home :
 He, lost in errors, his vain heart prefers ;
 She, safe in the simplicity of hers.

Not many wise, rich, noble, or profound
 In science, win one inch of heavenly ground.

And is it not a mortifying thought
The poor should gain it, and the rich should not?
No—the voluptuaries, who ne'er forget
One pleasure lost, lose heaven without regret;
Regret would rouse them, and give birth to prayer,
Prayer would add faith, and faith would fix them there.

Not that the Former of us all, in this,
Or aught he does, is governed by caprice;
The supposition is replete with sin,
And bears the brand of blasphemy burnt in.
Not so—the silver trumpet's heavenly call
Sounds for the poor, but sounds alike for all:
Kings are invited, and, would kings obey,
No slaves on earth more welcome were than they;
But royalty, nobility, and state,
Are such a dead preponderating weight,
That endless bliss (how strange soe'er it seem),
In counterpoise, flies up and kicks the beam.
'Tis open, and ye cannot enter—why?
Because ye will not, Conyers would reply—
And he says much that many may dispute
And cavil at with ease, but none refute.
Oh, blessed effect of penury and want,
The seed sown there, how vigorous is the plant;
No soil like poverty for growth divine.
As leanest land supplies the richest wine.
Earth gives too little, giving only bread,
To nourish pride, or turn the weakest head:
To them the sounding jargon of the schools
Seems what it is—a cap and bells for fools:
The light they walk by, kindled from above,
Shows them the shortest way to life and love:
They, strangers to the controversial field,
Where deists, always foiled, yet scorn to yield,
And never checked by what impedes the wise,
Believe, rush forward, and possess the prize.

Envy, ye great, the dull unlettered small:
Ye have much cause for envy—but not all.

—We boast some rich ones whom the Gospel sways,
And one who wears a coronet and prays;
Like gleanings of an olive-tree, they show
Here and there one upon the topmost bough.

How readily, upon the Gospel plan,
That question has its answer—What is man?
Sinful and weak, in every sense a wretch;
An instrument, whose chords upon the stretch,
And strained to the last screw that he can bear,
Yield only discord in his Maker's ear:
—Once the blest residence of truth divine,
Glorious as Solyma's interior shrine,
Where in his own oracular abode,
Dwelt visibly the light-creating God;
But made long since, like Babylon of old,
A den of mischiefs never to be told:
And she, once mistress of the realms around,
Now scattered wide and nowhere to be found,
As soon shall rise and reascend the throne,
By native power and energy her own,
As nature, at her own peculiar cost,
Restore to man the glories he has lost.
Go—bid the winter cease to chill the year,
Replace the wandering comet in his sphere,
Then boast (but wait for that un hoped-for hour)
The self-restoring arm of human power.
But what is man in his own proud esteem?
Hear him—himself the poet and the theme:
A monarch clothed with majesty and awe,
His mind his kingdom, and his will his law;
Grace in his mien, and glory in his eyes,
Supreme on earth, and worthy of the skies,
Strength in his heart, dominion in his nod,
And, thunderbolts excepted, quite a god!
So sings he, charmed with his own mind and form,
The song magnificent, the theme a worm!
Himself so much the source of his delight,
His Maker has no beauty in his sight.

See where he sits, contemplative and fixed,
Pleasure and wonder in his features mixed,
His passions tamed and all at his control,
How perfect the composure of his soul :
Complacency has breathed a gentle gale
O'er all his thoughts, and swelled his easy sail :
His books well trimmed, and in the gayest style,
Like regimental coxcombs rank and file,
Adorn his intellect as well as shelves,
And teach him notions splendid as themselves :
The Bible only stands neglected there,
Though that of all most worthy of his care ;
And, like an infant troublesome awake,
Is left to sleep for peace and quiet sake.

What shall the man deserve of humankind,
Whose happy skill and industry combined
Shall prove (what argument could never yet)
The Bible an imposture and a cheat ?
The praises of the libertine professed,
The worst of men, and curses of the best.
Where should the living, weeping o'er his woes ;
The dying, trembling at the awful close ;
Where the betrayed, forsaken, and oppressed,
The thousands whom the world forbids to rest ;
Where should they find (those comforts at an end
The Scripture yields), or hope to find, a friend ?
Sorrow might muse herself to madness then,
And, seeking exile from the sight of men,
Bury herself in solitude profound,
Grow frantic with her pangs, and bite the ground.
Thus often Unbelief, grown sick of life,
Flies to the tempting pool, or felon knife,
The jury meet, the coroner is short,
And lunacy the verdict of the court.
Reverse the sentence, let the truth be known,
Such lunacy is ignorance alone ;
They knew not, what some bishops may not know,
That Scripture is the only cure of woe ;

That field of promise, how it flings abroad
Its odour o'er the Christian's thorny road !
The soul, reposing on assured relief,
Feels herself happy amidst all her grief,
Forgets her labour as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song.

But the same word, that, like the polished share,
Ploughs up the roots of a believer's care,
Kills too the flowery weeds, where'er they grow,
That bind the sinner's Bacchanalian brow.

Oh, that unwelcome voice of heavenly love,
Sad messenger of mercy from above !
How does it grate upon his thankless ear,
Crippling his pleasures with the *cramp* of fear !
His will and judgment at continual strife,
That civil war embitters all his life ;
In vain he points his powers against the skies,
In vain he closes or averts his eyes ;
Truth will intrude—she bids him yet beware,
And shakes the sceptic in the scorner's chair.
Though various foes against the Truth combine,
Pride above all opposes her design ;
Pride, of a growth superior to the rest,
The subtlest serpent with the loftiest crest,
Swells at the thought, and, kindling into rage,
Would hiss the cherub Mercy from the stage.

And is the soul indeed so lost ? (she cries,)
Fallen from her glory, and too weak to rise ?
Torpid and dull, beneath a frozen zone,
Has she no spark that may be deemed her own ?
Grant her indebted to what zealots call
Grace undeserved, yet surely not for all !
Some beams of rectitude she yet displays,
Some love of virtue, and some power to praise ;
Can lift herself above corporeal things,
And, soaring on her own unborrowed wings,
Possess herself of all that's good or true,
Assert the skies, and vindicate her due.

Past indiscretion is a venial crime,
And if the youth, unmellowed yet by time,
Bore on his branch, luxuriant then and rude,
Fruits of a blighted size, austere and crude,
Maturer years shall happier stores produce,
And meliorate the well-concocted juice.
Then, conscious of her meritorious zeal,
To justice she may make her bold appeal,
And leave to mercy, with a tranquil mind,
The worthless and unfruitful of mankind.
Hear then how mercy, slighted and defied,
Retorts the affront against the crown of pride.

Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord.
The atonement a Redeemer's love has wrought
Is not for you—the righteous need it not.
Seest thou yon harlot, wooing all she meets,
The worn-out nuisance of the public streets,
Herself from morn to night, from night to morn,
Her own abhorrence, and as much your scorn ?
The gracious shower, unlimited and free,
Shall fall on her, when Heaven denies it thee.
Of all that wisdom dictates, this the drift,
That man is dead in sin, and life a gift.

Is virtue then, unless of Christian growth,
Mere fallacy, or foolishness, or both ?
Ten thousand sages lost in endless woe.
For ignorance of what they could not know ?
That speech betrays at once a bigot's tongue,
Charge not a God with such outrageous wrong.
Truly, not I ; the partial light men have,
My creed persuades me, well employed, may save ;
While he that scorns the noonday beam, perverse,
Shall find the blessing unimproved a curse.
Let heathen worthies, whose exalted mind
Left sensuality and dross behind,
Possess for me their undisputed lot,
And take unenvied the reward they sought.

But still in virtue of a Saviour's plea,
 Not blind by choice, but destined not to see,
 Their fortitude and wisdom were a flame
 Celestial, though they knew not whence it came,
 Derived from the same source of light and grace,
 That guides the Christian in his swifter race ;
 Their judge was conscience, and her rule their law ;
 That rule, pursued with reverence and with awe,
 Led them, however faltering, faint, and slow,
 From what they knew to what they wished to know.

But let not him that shares a brighter day
 Traduce the splendour of a noontide ray,
 Prefer the twilight of a darker time,
 And deem his base stupidity no crime ;
 The wretch who slights the bounty of the skies,
 And sinks, while favoured with the means to rise,
 Shall find them rated at their full amount—
 The good he scorned all carried to account.

Marshalling all his terrors as he came,
 Thunder, and earthquake, and devouring flame,
 From Sinai's top Jehovah gave the law,
 Life for obedience, death for every flaw.
 When the great Sovereign would his will express,
 He gives a perfect rule—what can he less ?
 And guards it with a sanction as severe
 As vengeance can inflict, or sinners fear :
 Else his own glorious rights he would disclaim,
 And man might safely trifle with his name.
 He bids him glow with unremitting love
 To all on earth, and to himself above ;
 Condemns the injurious deed, the slanderous tongue,
 The thought that meditates a brother's wrong :
 Brings not alone the more conspicuous part—
 His conduct—to the test, but tries his heart.

Hark ! universal nature shook and groaned ;
 'Twas the last trumpet—see the Judge enthroned :
 Rouse all your courage at your utmost need,
 Now summon every virtue, stand and plead.

What ! silent ? Is your boasting heard no more ?
That self-renouncing wisdom, learned before,
Had shed immortal glories on your brow,
That all your virtues cannot purchase now.

All joy to the believer ! He can speak—
Trembling yet happy, confident yet meek.

Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but thine,
Nor hoped, but in thy righteousness divine !
My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,
Were but the feeble efforts of a child ;
Howe'er performed, it was their brightest part,
That they proceeded from a grateful heart :
Cleansed in thine own all-purifying blood,
Forgive their evil, and accept their good :
I cast them at thy feet—my only plea
Is what it was, dependence upon thee :
While struggling in the vale of tears below,
That never failed, nor shall it fail me now.
Angelic gratulations rend the skies,
Pride falls unpitied, never more to rise ;
Humility is crowned, and Faith receives the prize.





EXPOSTULATION.

Tantaue, tam patiens, nullo certamine tolli
Dona sines? VIRG.

WHY weeps the muse for England? What appears
In England's case to move the muse to tears?
From side to side of her delightful isle
Is she not clothed with a perpetual smile?
Can nature add a charm, or art confer
A new-found luxury, not seen in her?
Where under heaven is ~~pleasure~~ more pursued,
Or where does cold reflection less intrude?
Her fields a rich expanse of wavy corn,
Poured out from plenty's overflowing horn;
Ambrosial gardens, in which art supplies
The fervour and the force of Indian skies;
Her peaceful shores, where busy commerce waits
To pour his golden tide through all her gates;
Whom fiery suns, that scorch the russet spice
Of Eastern groves, and oceans floored with ice
Forbid in vain to push his daring way
To darker climes, or climes of brighter day;
Whom the winds waft where'er the billows roll,
From the world's girdle to the frozen pole;
The chariots bounding in her wheel-worn streets;
Her vaults below, where every vintage meets;
Her theatres, her revels, and her sports;
The scenes to which not youth alone resorts,
But age, in spite of weakness and of pain,
Still haunts, in hope to dream of youth again,

All speak her happy : let the muse look round
From east to west, no sorrow can be found ;
Or only what, in cottages confined,
Sighs unregarded to the passing wind.
Then wherefore weep for England ? What appears
In England's case to move the muse to tears ?

The prophet wept for Israel ; wished his eyes
Were fountains fed with infinite supplies ;
For Israel dealt in robbery and wrong :
There were the scorner's and the slanderer's tongue ;
Oaths, used as playthings or convenient tools,
As interest biassed knaves, or fashion fools ;
Adultery, neighing at his neighbour's door ;
Oppression, labouring hard to grind the poor ;
The partial balance and deceitful weight ;
The treacherous smile, a mask for secret hate ;
Hypocrisy, formality, and prayer,
And the dull service of the lip, were there.
Her women, insolent and self-caressed,
By vanity's unwearied finger dressed,
Forgot the blush that virgin fears impart
To modest cheeks, and borrowed one from art ;
Were just such trifles, without worth or use,
As silly pride and idleness produce ;
Curled, scented, furbelowed, and flounced around,
With feet too delicate to touch the ground,
They stretched the neck, and rolled the wanton eye,
And sighed for every fool that fluttered by.

He saw his people slaves to every lust,
Lewd, avaricious, arrogant, unjust ;
He heard the wheels of an avenging God
Groan heavily along the distant road ;
Saw Babylon set wide her two-leaved brass
To let the military deluge pass ;
Jerusalem a prey, her glory soiled,
Her princes captive, and her treasures spoiled ;
Wept till all Israel heard his bitter cry,
Stamped with his foot, and smote upon his thigh ;

But wept, and stamped, and smote his thigh in vain.
Pleasure is deaf when told of future pain,
And sounds prophetic are too rough to suit
Ears long accustomed to the pleasing lute :
They scorned his inspiration and his theme,
Pronounced him frantic, and his fears a dream ;
With self-indulgence winged the fleeting hours,
Till the foe found them, and down fell the towers.

Long time Assyria bound them in her chain,
Till penitence had purged the public stain,
And Cyrus, with relenting pity moved,
Returned them happy to the land they loved ;
There, proof against prosperity, awhile
They stood the test of her ensnaring smile,
And had the grace in scenes of peace to show
The virtue they had learned in scenes of woe.
But man is frail, and can but ill sustain
A long immunity from grief and pain ;
And after all the joys that plenty leads,
With tiptoe step vice silently succeeds.

When He that ruled them with a shepherd's rod,
In form a man, in dignity a God,
Came, not expected in that humble guise,
To sift and search them with unerring eyes,
He found, concealed beneath a fair outside,
The filth of rottenness and worm of pride ;
Their piety a system of deceit,
Scripture employed to sanctify the cheat ;
The Pharisee, the dupe of his own art,
Self-idolized, and yet a knave at heart.

When nations are to perish in their sins,
'Tis in the church the leprosy begins ;
The priest, whose office is, with zeal sincere,
To watch the fountain and preserve it clear,
Carelessly nods and sleeps upon the brink,
While others poison what the flock must drink ;
Or, waking at the call of lust alone,
Infuses lies and errors of his own :



His unsuspecting sheep believe it pure ;
 And, tainted by the very means of cure,
 Catch from each other a contagious spot,
 The foul forerunner of a general rot.
 Then truth is hushed, that heresy may preach ;
 And all is trash that reason cannot reach ;
 Then God's own image on the soul impressed
 Becomes a mockery and a standing jest ;
 And faith, the root whence only can arise
 The graces of a life that wins the skies,
 Loses at once all value and esteem,
 Pronounced by graybeards a pernicious dream :
 Then ceremony leads her bigots forth,
 Prepared to fight for shadows of no worth ;
 While truths, on which eternal things depend,
 Find not, or hardly find, a single friend :
 As soldiers watch the signal of command,
 They learn to bow, to kneel, to sit, to stand ;
 Happy to fill religion's vacant place
 With hollow form, and gesture, and grimace.

Such, when the teacher of his church was there,
People and priest, the sons of Israel were ;
Stiff in the letter, lax in the design
And import, of their oracles divine ;
Their learning, legendary, false, absurd,
And yet exalted above God's own Word ;



They drew a curse from an intended good,
Puffed up with gifts they never understood.
He judged them with as terrible a frown,
As if not love, but wrath, had brought him down :
Yet he was gentle as soft summer airs,
Had grace for others' sins, but none for theirs ;

Through all he spoke a noble plainness ran—
Rhetoric is artifice, the work of man ;
And tricks and turns, that fancy may devise,
Are far too mean for Him that rules the skies.
The astonished vulgar trembled while he tore
The mask from faces never seen before ;
He stripped the impostors in the noonday sun,
Showed that they followed all they seemed to shun ;
Their prayers made public, their excesses kept
As private as the chambers where they slept ;
The temple and its holy rites profaned
By mummeries He that dwelt in it disdained ;
Uplifted hands, that at convenient times
Could act extortion and the worst of crimes,
Washed with a neatness scrupulously nice,
And free from every taint but that of vice.
Judgment, however tardy, mends her pace
When obstinacy once has conquered grace.
They saw distemper healed, and life restored,
In answer to the fiat of his word ;
Confessed the wonder, and with daring tongue
Blasphemed the authority from which it sprung.
They knew, by sure prognostics seen on high,
The future tone and temper of the sky ;
But—grave dissemblers !—could not understand
That sin let loose speaks punishment at hand.

Ask now of history's authentic page,
And call up evidence from every age ;
Display with busy and laborious hand
The blessings of the most indebted land ;
What nation will you find, whose annals prove
So rich an interest in Almighty love ?
Where dwell they now, where dwelt in ancient day
A people planted, watered, blest as they ?
Let Egypt's plagues and Canaan's woes proclaim
The favours poured upon the Jewish name ;
Their freedom purchased for them at the cost
Of all their hard oppressors valued most ;

Their title to a country not their own
 Made sure by prodigies till then unknown ;
 For them the states they left made waste and void ;
 For them the states to which they went destroyed ;
 A cloud to measure out their march by day,
 By night a fire to cheer the gloomy way ;
 That moving signal summoning, when best,
 Their host to move, and, when it stayed, to rest.
 For them the rocks dissolved into a flood,
 The dews condensed into angelic food,
 Their very garments sacred, old yet new,
 And Time forbid to touch them as he flew ;
 Streams, swelled above the bank, enjoined to stand
 While they passed through to their appointed land ;
 Their leader armed with meekness, zeal, and love,
 And graced with clear credentials from above ;
 Themselves secured beneath the Almighty wing ;
 Their God their captain,* lawgiver, and king ;
 Crowned with a thousand victories, and at last
 Lords of the conquered soil, there rooted fast,
 In peace possessing what they won by war,
 Their name far published, and revered as far ;
 Where will you find a race like theirs, endowed
 With all that man e'er wished, or Heaven bestowed ?

 They, and they only, amongst all mankind,
 Received the transcript of the Eternal Mind :
 Were trusted with his own engraven laws,
 And constituted guardians of his cause ;
 Theirs were the prophets, theirs the priestly call,
 And theirs by birth the Saviour of us all.
 In vain the nations, that had seen them rise
 With fierce and envious yet admiring eyes,
 Had sought to crush them, guarded as they were
 By power divine, and skill that could not err.
 Had they maintained allegiance firm and sure,
 And kept the faith immaculate and pure,

Then the proud eagles of all-conquering Rome
Had found one city not to be o'ercome ;
And the twelve standards of the tribes, unfurled,
Had bid defiance to the warring world.
But grace abused brings forth the foulest deeds,
As richest soil the most luxuriant weeds.
Cured of the golden calves—their fathers' sin —
They set up self, that idol god within ;
Viewed a deliverer with disdain and hate,
Who left them still a tributary state ;
Seized fast his hand, held out to set them free
From a worse yoke, and nailed it to the tree :
There was the consummation and the crown,
The flower of Israel's infamy full blown ;
Thence date their sad declension and their fall ;
Their woes, not yet repcaled—thence date them all.

Thus fell the best instructed in her day,
And the most favoured land, look where we may.
Philosophy, indeed, on Grecian eyes
Had poured the day, and cleared the Roman skies :
In other climes, perhaps, creative art,
With power surpassing theirs, performed her part ;
Might give more life to marble, or might fill
The glowing tablets with a juster skill,
Might shine in fable, and grace idle themes
With all the embroidery of poetic dreams ;
'Twas theirs alone to dive into the plan
That truth and mercy had revealed to man ;
And, while the world beside, that plan unknown,
Deified useless wood or senseless stone,
They breathed in faith their well-directed prayers,
And the true God, the God of truth, was theirs.

Their glory faded, and their race dispersed,
The last of nations now, though once the first ;
They warn and teach the proudest, would they learn,
Keep wisdom, or meet vengeance in your turn :
If we escaped not, if Heaven spared not us,
Peeled, scattered, and exterminated thus ;

If vice received her retribution due,
When we were visited, what hope for you ?
When God arises with an awful frown
To punish lust, or pluck presumption down ;
When gifts perverted, or not duly prized,
Pleasure o'ervalued and his grace despised,
Provoke the vengeance of his righteous hand,
To pour down wrath upon a thankless land,—
He will be found impartially severe,
Too just to wink, or speak the guilty clear.
Oh Israel ! of all nations most undone !
Thy diadem displaced, thy sceptre gone ;
Thy temple, once thy glory, fallen and razed,
And thou a worshipper e'en where thou mayest ;
Thy services, once holy without spot,
Mere shadows now, their ancient pomp forgot ;
Thy Levites, once a consecrated host,
No longer Levites, and their lineage lost,
And thou thyself o'er every country sown,
With none on earth that thou canst call thine own ;
Cry aloud, thou that sittest in the dust,
Cry to the proud, the cruel, and unjust ;
Knock at the gates of nations, rouse their fears ;
Say wrath is coming, and the storm appears ;
But raise the shrillest cry in British ears.

What ails thee, restless as the waves that roar,
And fling their foam against thy chalky shore ?
Mistress, at least while Providence shall please,
And trident-bearing queen of the wide seas—
Why, having kept good faith, and often shown
Friendship and truth to others, find'st thou none ?
Thou that hast set the persecuted free,
None interposes now to succour thee.
Countries indebted to thy power, that shine
With light derived from thee, would smother thine :
Thy very children watch for thy disgrace,
A lawless brood, and curse thee to thy face.

*Thy rulers load thy credit, year by year,
With sums Peruvian mines could never clear;
As if, like arches built with skilful hand,
The more 'twere pressed the firmer it would stand.*

The cry in all thy ships is still the same—
Speed us away to battle and to fame.
Thy mariners explore the wide expanse,
Impatient to descry the flags of France ;
But, though they fight as thine have ever fought,
Return ashamed without the wreaths they sought.
Thy senate is a scene of civil jar,
Chaos of contrarieties at war ;
Where sharp and solid, phlegmatic and light,
Discordant atoms meet, ferment, and fight ;
Where obstinacy takes his sturdy stand,
To disconcert what policy has planned ;
Where policy is busied all night long
In setting right what faction has set wrong ;
Where flails of oratory thrash the floor,
That yields them chaff and dust, and nothing more.
Thy racked inhabitants repine, complain,
Taxed till the brow of labour sweats in vain ;
War lays a burden on the reeling state,
And peace does nothing to relieve the weight ;
Successive loads succeeding broils impose,
And sighing millions prophesy the close.

Is adverse providence, when pondered well,
So dimly writ, or difficult to spell,
Thou canst not read with readiness and ease
Providence adverse in events like these ?
Know, then, that heavenly wisdom on this ball
Creates, gives birth to, guides, consummates all ;
That, while laborious and quick-thoughted man
Snuffs up the praise of what he seems to plan,
He first conceives, then perfects his design,
As a mere instrument in hands divine :
Blind to the working of that secret power
That balances the wings of every hour,

The busy trifler dreams himself alone,
Frames many a purpose, and God works his own.
States thrive or wither as moons wax and wane,
E'en as his will and his decrees ordain :
While honour, virtue, piety, bear sway,
They flourish ; and as these decline, decay ;
In just resentment of his injured laws,
He pours contempt on them, and on their cause ;
Strikes the rough thread of error right athwart
The web of every scheme they have at heart ;
Bids rottenness invade and bring to dust
The pillars of support in which they trust,
And do his errand of disgrace and shame
On the chief strength and glory of the frame.
None ever yet impeded what he wrought,
None bars him out from his most secret thought :
Darkness itself before his eye is light,
And hell's close mischief naked in his sight.

Stand now and judge thyself.—Hast thou incurred
His anger who can waste thee with a word,
Who poises and proportions sea and land,
Weighing them in the hollow of his hand,
And in whose awful sight all nations seem
As grasshoppers, as dust, a drop, a dream ?
Hast thou (a sacrilege his soul abhors)
Claimed all the glory of thy prosperous wars ?
Proud of thy fleets and armies, stolen the gem
Of his just praise, to lavish it on them ?
Hast thou not learned, what thou art often told,
A truth still sacred, and believed of old,
That no success attends on spears and swords
Unblest, and that the battle is the Lord's ?
That courage is his creature ; and dismay
The post, that at his bidding speeds away,
Ghastly in feature, and his stammering tongue
With doleful rumour and sad presage hung,
To quell the valour of the stoutest heart,
And teach the combatant a woman's part ?

That he bids thousands fly when none pursue,
Saves as he will by many or by few,
And claims for ever, as his royal right,
The event and sure decision of the fight ?

Hast thou, though suckled at fair freedom's breast,
Exported slavery to the conquered East,
Pulled down the tyrants India served with dread,
And raised thyself, a greater, in their stead ?
Gone thither armed and hungry, returned full,
Fed from the richest veins of the Mogul,
A despot big with power obtained by wealth,
And that obtained by rapine and by stealth ?
With Asiatic vices stored thy mind,
But left their virtues, and thine own, behind ?
And, having trucked thy soul, brought home the fee,
To tempt the poor to sell himself to thee ?

Hast thou, by statute, shoved from its design
The Saviour's feast—his own blest bread and wine—
And made the symbols of atoning graco
An office key, a picklock to a place,
That infidels may prove their title good
By an oath dipped in sacramental blood ?—
A blot that will be still a blot, in spite
Of all that grave apologists may write ;
And though a bishop toil to cleanse the stain,
He wipes and scours the silver cup in vain.
And hast thou sworn on every slight pretence,
Till perjuries are common as bad pence,
While thousands, careless of the damning sin,
Kiss the book's outside, who ne'er look within ?

Hast thou, when Heaven has clothed thee with disgrace,
And, long provoked, repaid thee to thy face
(For thou hast known eclipses, and endured
Dimness and anguish, all thy beams obscured,
When sin has shed dishonour on thy brow ;
And never of a sabler hue than now),
Hast thou, with heart perverse and conscience scared,
Despising all rebuke, still persevered ;

And, having chosen evil, scorned the voice
 That cried, Repent!—and gloried in thy choice?
 Thy fastings, when calamity at last
Suggests the expedient of a yearly fast,
 What mean they? Canst thou dream there is a power
 In lighter diet at a later hour,
 To charm to sleep the threatening of the skies,
 And hide past folly from all-seeing eyes?
 The fast that wins deliverance, and suspends
 The stroke that a vindictive God intends,
 Is to renounce hypocrisy; to draw
 Thy life upon the pattern of the law;
 To war with pleasure, idolized before;
 To vanquish lust, and wear its yoke no more.
 All fasting else, whate'er be the pretence,
 Is wooing mercy by renewed offence.

Hast thou within thee sin, that in old time
 Brought fire from heaven—the sex-abusing crime,
 Whose horrid perpetration stamps disgrace,
 Baboons are free from, upon human race?
 Think on the fruitful and well-watered spot
 That fed the flocks and herds of wealthy Lot,
 Where Paradise seemed still vouchsafed on earth,
 Burning and scorched into perpetual dearth;
 Or, in his words who damned the base desire,
 Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire:
 Then nature injured, scandalized, defiled,
 Unveiled her blushing cheek, looked on, and smiled;
 Beheld with joy the lovely scene defaced,
 And praised the wrath that laid her beauties waste.

Far be the thought from any verse of mine,
 And farther still the formed and fixed design,
 To thrust the charge of deeds that I detest
 Against an innocent unconscious breast.
 The man that dares traduce, because he can
 With safety to himself, is not a man:
 An individual is a sacred mark,
 Not to be pierced in play, or in the dark;

But public censure speaks a public foe,
Unless a zeal for virtue guide the blow.

The priestly brotherhood, devout, sincere,
From mean self-interest and ambition clear,
Their hope in heaven, servility their scorn,
Prompt to persuade, expostulate, and warn,
Their wisdom pure, and given them from above,
Their usefulness ensured by zeal and love,
As meek as the man Moses, and withal
As bold as in Agrippa's presence Paul,
Should fly the world's contaminating touch,
Holy and unpolluted;—are thine such?
Except a few with Eli's spirit blest,
Hophni and Phineas may describe the rest.

Where shall a teacher look, in days like these,
For ears and hearts that he can hope to please?
Look to the poor—the simple and the plain
Will hear perhaps thy salutary strain:
Humility is gentle, apt to learn—
Speak but the word, will listen and return. '
Alas, not so! the poorest of the flock
Are proud, and set their faces as a rock;
Denied that earthly opulence they choose,
God's better gift they scoff at and refuse.
The rich, the produce of a nobler stem,
Are more intelligent at least—try them.
O vain inquiry! they, without remorse,
Are altogether gone a devious course;
Where beckoning pleasure leads them, wildly stray;
Have burst the bands, and cast the yoke away.

Now borne upon the wings of truth sublime,
Review thy dim original and prime.
This island, spot of unreclaimed rude earth,
The cradle that received thee at thy birth,
Was rocked by many a rough Norwegian blast.
And Danish howlings scared thee as they passed;
For thou wast born amid the din of arms,
And sucked a breast that panted with alarms.

While yet thou wast a grovelling puling chit,
Thy bones not fashioned, and thy joints not knit,
The Roman taught thy stubborn knee to bow,
Though twice a Cæsar could not bend thee now.
His victory was that of orient light,
When the sun's shafts disperse the gloom of night.
Thy language at this distant moment shows
How much the country to the conqueror owes;
Expressive, energetic, and refined,
It sparkles with the gems he left behind :
He brought thy land a blessing when he came,
He found thee savage, and he left thee tame ;
Taught thee to clothe thy pinked and painted hide,
And grace thy figure with a soldier's pride ;
He sowed the seeds of order where he went,
Improved thee far beyond his own intent ;
And, while he ruled thee by the sword alone,
Made thee at last a warrior like his own.
Religion, if in heavenly truths attired,
Needs only to be seen to be admired ;
But thine, as dark as witcheries of the night,
Was formed to harden hearts and shock the sight ;
Thy Druids struck the well-strung harps they bore
With fingers deeply dyed in human gore ;
And while the victim slowly bled to death,
Upon the rolling chords rung out his dying breath.

Who brought the lamp that, with awaking beams,
Dispelled thy gloom, and broke away thy dreams ?
Tradition, now decrepit and worn out,
Babbler of ancient fables, leaves a doubt :
But still light reached thee ; and those gods of thine,
Woden and Thor, each tottering in his shrine,
Fell broken and defaced at their own door,
As Dagon in Philistia long before.
But Rome, with sorceries and magic wand,
Soon raised a cloud that darkened every land ;
And thine was smothered in the stench and fog
Of Tiber's marshes and the papal bog.

Then priests, with bulls and briefs, and shaven crowns,
 And griping fists, and unrelenting frowns,
 Legates and delegates, with powers from hell,
 Though heavenly in pretension, fleeced thee well;
 And to this hour, to keep it fresh in mind,
 Some twigs of that old scourge are left behind.*



Thy soldiery, the pope's well-managed pack,
 Were trained beneath his lash, and knew the smack.
 And, when he laid them on the scent of blood,
 Would hunt a Saracen through fire and flood.
 Lavish of life, to win an empty tomb,
 That proved a mint of wealth, a mine to Rome,
 They left their bones beneath unfriendly skies,
 His worthless absolution all the prize.
 Thou wast the veriest slave, in days of yore,
 That ever dragged a chain or tugged an oar;

* Which may be found at Doctors' Commons.

Thy monarchs arbitrary, fierce, unjust,
Themselves the slaves of bigotry or lust,
Disdained thy counsels, only in distress
Found thee a goodly sponge for power to press.
Thy chiefs, the lords of many a petty fee,
Provoked and harassed, in return plagued thee ;



Called thee away from peaceable employ,
Domestic happiness, and rural joy,
To waste thy life in arms, or lay it down
In causeless feuds and bickerings of their own.

Thy parliaments adored, on bended knees,
The sovereignty they were convened to please ;
Whate'er was asked, too timid to resist,
Complied with, and were graciously dismissed ;
And if some Spartan soul a doubt expressed,
And, blushing at the tameness of the rest,
Dared to suppose the subject had a choice,
He was a traitor by the general voice.
O ! slave with powers thou didst not dare exert,
Verse cannot stoop so low as thy desert ;
It shakes the sides of splenetic disdain,
Thou self-entitled ruler of the main,
To trace thee to the date when yon fair sea,
That clips thy shores, had no such charms for thee ;
When other nations flew from coast to coast,
And thou hadst neither fleet nor flag to boast.
Kneel now, and lay thy forehead in the dust ;
Blush if thou canst ; not petrified, thou must :
Act but an honest and a faithful part ;
Compare what then thou wast with what thou art,
And, God's disposing providence confessed,
Obduracy itself must yield the rest—
Then thou art bound to serve him, and to prove,
Hour after hour, thy gratitude and love.

Has he not hid thee and thy favoured land,
For ages safe beneath his sheltering hand,
Given thee his blessing on the clearest proof,
Bid nations leagued against thee stand aloof,
And charged hostility and hate to roar
Where else they would, but not upon thy shore ?
His power secured thee, when presumptuous Spain
Baptized her fleet Invincible in vain ;
Her gloomy monarch, doubtful and resigned
To every pang that racks an anxious mind,
Asked of the waves that broke upon his coast,
What tidings ? and the surge replied—All lost !
And when the Stuart, leaning on the Scot—
Then too much feared, and now too much forgot—

Pierced to the very centre of the realm,
And hoped to seize his abdicated helm,
'Twas but to prove how quickly with a frown,
He that had raised thee could have plucked thee down.
Peculiar is the grace by thee possessed,
Thy foes implacable, thy land at rest ;
Thy thunders travel over earth and seas,
And all at home is pleasure, wealth, and ease.
'Tis thus, extending his tempestuous arm,
Thy Maker fills the nations with alarm,
While his own heaven surveys the troubled scene,
And feels no change, unshaken and serene.
Freedom, in other lands scarce known to shine,
Pours out a flood of splendour upon thine ;
Thou hast as bright an interest in her rays
As over Roman had in Rome's best days.
True freedom is where no restraint is known
That Scripture, justice, and good sense disown.
Where only vice and injury are tied,
And all from shore to shore is free beside.
Such freedom is—and Windsor's hoary towers
Stood trembling at the boldness of thy powers,
That won a nymph on that immortal plain,
Like her the fabled Phœbus wooed in vain :
He found the laurel only—happier you,
The unfading laurel, and the virgin too !*

Now think, if pleasure have a thought to spare ;
If God himself be not beneath her care ;
If business, constant as the wheels of time,
Can pause an hour to read a serious rhyme ;
If the new mail thy merchants now receive,
Or expectation of the next give leave ;
Oh think, if chargeable with deep arrears
For such indulgence gilded all thy years,
How much, though long neglected, shining yet,
The beams of heavenly truth have swelled the debt.

* Alluding to the grant of Magna Charta, which was extorted from King John by the barons at Runnymede, near Windsor.

When persecuting zeal made royal sport
With tortured innocence in Mary's court,
And Bonner, blythe as shepherd at a wake,
Enjoyed the show, and danced about the stake ;
The sacred book, its value understood,
Received the seal of martyrdom in blood.
Those holy men, so full of truth and grace,
Seem to reflection of a different race,
Meek, modest, venerable, wise, sincere,
In such a cause they could not dare to fear ;
They could not purchase earth with such a prize,
Or spare a life too short to reach the skies.
From them to thee conveyed along the tide,
Their streaming hearts poured freely when they died ;
Those truths, which neither use nor years impair,
Invite thee, woo thee, to the bliss they share.
What dotage will not vanity maintain ?
What web too weak to catch a modern brain ?
The moles and bats in full assembly find,
On special search, the keen-eyed eagle blind.
And did they dream, and art thou wiser now ?
Prove it—if better, I submit and bow.
Wisdom and goodness are twin-born, one heart
Must hold both sisters, never seen apart.
So then—as darkness overspread the deep,
Ere nature rose from her eternal sleep,
And this delightful earth, and that fair sky,
Leaped out of nothing, called by the Most High ;
By such a change thy darkness is made light,
Thy chaos order, and thy weakness might ;
And he whose power mere nullity obeys,
Who found thee nothing, formed thee for his praise,
To praise him is to serve him, and fulfil,
Doing and suffering, his unquestioned will ;
'Tis to believe what men, inspired of old,
Faithful, and faithfully informed, unfold ;
Candid and just, with no false aim in view,
To take for truth what cannot but be true ;

To learn in God's own school the Christian part,
And bind the task assigned thee to thine heart :
Happy the man there seeking and there found,
Happy the nation where such men abound !

How shall a verse impress thee? by what name
Shall I abjure thee not to court thy shame?
By theirs whose bright example, unimpeached,
Directs thee to that eminence they reached.
Heroes and worthies of days past, thy sires?
Or his, who touched their hearts with hallowed fires?
Their names, alas! in vain reproach an age,
Whom all the vanities they scorned engage ;
And his, that seraphs tremble at, is hung
Disgracefully on every trifler's tongue,
Or serves the champion in forensic war
To flourish and parade with at the bar.
Pleasure herself perhaps suggests a plea,
If interest move thee, to persuade e'en thee ;
By every charm that smiles upon her face,
By joys possessed, and joys still held in chase,
If dear society be worth a thought,
And if the feast of freedom cloy thee not,
Reflect that these, and all that seems thine own,
Held by the tenure of his will alone,
Like angels in the service of their Lord,
Remain with thee, or leave thee at his word !
That gratitude and temperance in our use
Of what he gives, unsparing and profuse,
Secure the favour, and enhance the joy,
That thankless waste and wild abuse destroy.
But above all reflect, how cheap soe'er
Those rights, that millions envy thee, appear,
And though resolved to risk them, and swim down
The tide of pleasure, heedless of his frown,
That blessings truly sacred, and when given
Marked with the signature and stamp of Heaven,
The word of prophecy, those truths divine,
Which make that Heaven, if thou desire it, thine,

(Awful alternative ! believed, beloved,
Thy glory, and thy shame if unimproved),
Are never long vouchsafed, if pushed aside
With cold disgust or philosophic pride ;
And that, judicially withdrawn, disgrace,
Error, and darkness occupy their place.

A world is up in arms, and thou, a spot
Not quickly found, if negligently sought,
Thy soul as ample as thy bounds are small,
Endur'st the brunt, and dar'st defy them all ;
And wilt thou join to this bold enterprise
A bolder still, a contest with the skies ?
Remember, if he guard thee and secure,
Whoe'er assails thee, thy success is sure ;
But if He leave thee, though the skill and power
Of nations, sworn to spoil thee and devour,
Were all collected in thy single arm,
And thou couldst laugh away the fear of harm,
That strength would fail, opposed against the push
And feeble onset of a pigmy rush.

Say not (and if the thought of such defence
Should spring within thy bosom, drive it thence)
What nation amongst all my foes is free
From crimes as base as any charged on me ?
Their measure filled, they too shall pay the debt,
Which God, though long forborne, will not forget.
But know that wrath divine, when most severe,
Makes justice still the guide of his career,
And will not punish, in one mingled crowd,
Them without light, and thee without a cloud.

Muse, hang this harp upon yon aged beech,
Still murmuring with the solemn truths I teach ;
And while at intervals a cold blast sings
Through the dry leaves, and pants upon the strings,
My soul shall sigh in secret, and lament
A nation scourged, yet tardy to repent.
I know the warning song is sung in vain ;
That few will hear, and fewer heed the strain ;

But if a sweeter voice, and one designed
A blessing to my country and mankind,
Reclaim the wandering thousands, and bring home
A flock so scattered and so wont to roam,
Then place it once again between my knees ;
The sound of truth will then be sure to please ;
And truth alone, where'er my life be cast,
In scenes of plenty, or the pining waste,
Shall be my chosen theme, my glory to the last.





H O P E .

. . . Doccas iter, et sacra ostia pandas
VIRG., *Æn.* 6

Ask what is human life ; the sage replies,
With disappointment lowering in his eyes,
A painful passage o'er a restless flood,
A vain pursuit of fugitive false good,
A scene of fancied bliss and heartfelt care,
Closing at last in darkness and despair.
The poor, inured to drudgery and distress,
Act without aim, think little, and feel less,
And nowhere, but in feigned Arcadian scenes,
Taste happiness, or know what pleasure means.
Riches are passed away from hand to hand,
As fortune, vice, or folly may command ;
As in a dance the pair that take the lead
Turn downward, and the lowest pair succeed,
So shifting and so various is the plan
By which Heaven rules the mixed affairs of man ;
Vicissitude wheels round the motley crowd,
The rich grow poor, the poor become purse-proud ;
Business is labour, and man's weakness such,
Pleasure is labour too, and tires as much :
The very sense of it foregoes its use,
By repetition palled, by age obtuse.
Youth lost in dissipation we deplore,
Through life's sad remnant, what no sighs restore ;
Our years, a fruitless race without a prize,
Too many, yet too few to make us wise.

Dangling his cane about, and taking snuff,
 Lothario cries, What philosophic stuff—
 O querulous and weak!—whose useless brain
 Once thought of nothing, and now thinks in vain;
 Whose eye reverted weeps o'er all the past,
 Whose prospect shows thee a disheartening waste;
 Would age in thee resign his wintry reign,
 And youth invigorate that frame again,
 Renewed desire would grace with other speech
 Joys always prized, when placed within our reach.



For lift thy palsied head, shake off the gloom
 That overhangs the borders of thy tomb,
 See nature gay, as when she first began
 With smiles alluring her admirer man;

She spreads the morning over Eastern hills,
Earth glitters with the drops the night distills ;
The sun, obedient, at her call appears
To fling his glories o'er the robe she wears ;
Banks clothed with flowers, groves filled with sprightly
sounds,

The yellow tilth, green meads, rocks, rising grounds,
Streams edged with osiers, fattening every field
Where'er they flow, now seen and now concealed ;
From the blue rim, where skies and mountains meet,
Down to the very turf beneath thy feet,
Ten thousand charms, that only fools despise,
Or pride can look at with indifferent eyes,
All speak one language, all with one sweet voice
Cry to her universal realm, Rejoice !
Man feels the spur of passions and desires,
And she gives largely more than he requires ;
Not that his hours devoted all to care,
Hollow-eyed abstinence, and lean despair,
The wretch may pine, while to his smell, taste, sight,
She holds a paradise of rich delight ;
But gently to rebuke his awkward fear,
To prove that what she gives she gives sincere,
To banish hesitation, and proclaim
His happiness her dear, her only aim.
'Tis grave philosophy's absurdest dream,
That Heaven's intentions are not what 'hey seem,
That only shadows are dispensed below,
And earth has no reality but woe.

Thus things terrestrial wear a different hue,
As youth or age persuades ; and neither true.
So Flora's wreath through coloured crystal seen,
The rose or lily appears blue or green,
But still the imputed tints are those alone
The medium represents, and not their own.

To rise at noon, sit slipshod and undressed,
To read the news, or fiddle, as seems best,



Till half the world comes rattling at his door,
 To fill the dull vacuity till four ;
 And, just when evening turns the blue vault gray,
 To spend two hours in dressing for the day ;
 To make the sun a bauble without use,
 Save for the fruits his heavenly beams produce ;
 Quite to forget, or deem it *worth* no thought,
 Who bids him shine, or if he shine or not ;
 Through mere necessity to close his eyes
 Just when the larks and when the shepherds rise ;
 Is such a life, so tediously the same,
 So void of all utility or aim,
 That poor Jonquil, with almost every breath,
 Sighs for his exit, vulgarly called death :
 For he, with all his follies, has a mind
 Not yet so blank, or fashionably blind,
 But now and then perhaps a feeble ray
 Of distant wisdom shoots across his way ;

By which he reads, that life without a plan,
As useless as the moment it began,
Serves merely as a soil for discontent
To thrive in ; an incumbrance ere half spent.
Oh ! weariness beyond what asses feel,
That tread the circuit of the cistern wheel ;
A dull rotation, never at a stay,
Yesterday's face twin image of to-day ;
While conversation, an exhausted stock,
Grows drowsy as the clicking of a clock.
No need, he cries, of gravity stuffed out
With academic dignity devout,
To read wise lectures, vanity the text :
Proclaim the remedy, ye learned, next ;
For truth self-evident, with pomp impressed,
Is vanity surpassing all the rest.

That remedy, not hid in deeps profound,
Yet seldom sought where only to be found,
While passion turns aside from its due scope
The inquirer's aim, that remedy is Hope.
Life is his gift, from whom whate'er life needs,
With every good and perfect gift, proceeds ;
Bestowed on man, like all that we partake,
Royally, freely, for his bounty's sake ;
Transient, indeed, as is the fleeting hour,
And yet the seed of an immortal flower ;
Designed, in honour of his boundless love,
To fill with fragrance his abode above ;
No trifle, howsoever short it seem,
And, howsoever shadowy, no dream ;
Its value, what no thought can ascertain,
Nor all an angel's eloquence explain ;
Men deal with life as children with their play,
Who first misuse, then cast their toys away ;
Live to no sober purpose, and contend
That their Creator had no serious end.
When God and man stand opposite in view,
Man's disappointment must of course ensue.

The just Creator condescends to write,
In beams of inextinguishable light,
His names of wisdom, goodness, power, and love,
On all that blooms below, or shines above ;
To catch the wandering notice of mankind,
And teach the world, if not perversely blind,
His gracious attributes, and prove the share
His offspring hold in his paternal care.
If, led from earthly things to things divine,
His creature thwart not his august design,
Then praise is heard instead of reasoning pride,
And captious cavil and complaint subside.
Nature, employed in her allotted place,
Is handmaid to the purposes of grace ;
By good vouchsafed makes known superior good,
And bliss not seen by blessings understood :
That bliss, revealed in Scripture, with a glow
Bright as the covenant-ensuring bow,
Fires all his feelings with a noble scorn
Of sensual evil—and thus Hope is born.

Hope sets the stamp of vanity on all
That men have deemed substantial since the fall,
Yet has the wondrous virtue to educe
From emptiness itself a real use ;
And while she takes, as at a father's hand,
What health and sober appetite demand,
From fading good derives, with chemic art,
That lasting happiness, a thankful heart.
Hope, with uplifted foot, set free from earth,
Pants for the place of her ethereal birth,
On steady wings sails through the immense abyss,
Plucks amaranthine joys from bowers of bliss,
And crowns the soul, while yet a mourner here,
With wreaths like those triumphant spirits wear
Hope as an anchor firm and sure, holds fast
The Christian vessel, and defies the blast.
Hope ! nothing else can nourish and secure
His new-born virtues, and preserve him pure.

Hope! let the wretch, once conscious of the joy,
 Whom now despairing agonies destroy,
 Speak, for he can, and none so well as he,
 What treasures centre, what delights in thee.
 Had he the gems, the spices, and the land
 That boasts the treasure all at his command ;
 The fragrant grove, the inestimable mine,
 Were light, when weighed against one smile of thine.

Though clasped and cradled in his nurse's arms,
 He shine with all a cherub's artless charms,



Man is the genuine offspring of revolt,
 Stubborn and sturdy, a wild ass's colt ;
 His passions, like the watery stores that sleep
 Beneath the smiling surface of the deep,

Wait but the lashes of a wintry storm,
To frown and roar, and shake his feeble form.
From infancy through childhood's giddy maze,
Froward at school, and fretful in his plays,
The puny tyrant burns to subjugate
The free republic of the whip-gig state.
If one, his equal in athletic frame,
Or, more provoking still, of nobler name,
Dare step across his arbitrary views,
An Iliad, only not in verse, ensues :
The little Greeks look trembling at the scales,
Till the best tongue or heaviest hand prevails.

Now see him launched into the world at large :
If priest, supinely droning o'er his charge,
Their fleeco his pillow, and his weekly drawl,
Though short, too long, the price he pays for all.
If lawyer, loud whatever cause he plead,
But proudest of the worst, if that succeed.
Perhaps a grave physician, gathering fees,
Punctually paid for lengthening out disease ;
No Cotton, whose humanity sheds rays,
That make superior skill his second praise.
If arms engage him, he devotes to sport
His date of life so likely to be short ;
A soldier may be anything, if brave ;
So may a tradesman, if not quite a knave.

Such stuff the world is made of ; and mankind,
To passion, interest, pleasure, whim, resigned,
Insist on, as if each were his own pope,
Forgiveness, and the privilege of hope ;
But conscience, in some awful silent hour,
When captivating lusts have lost their power,
Perhaps when sickness, or some fearful dream,
Reminds him of religion, hated theme !
Starts from the down on which she lately slept,
And tells of laws despised, at least not kept ;
Shows with a pointing finger, but no noise,
A pale procession of past sinful joys,

All witnesses of blessings foully scorned;
And life abused, and not to be suborned.
Mark these, she says; these, summoned from afar,
Begin their march to meet thee at the bar:
There find a judge inexorably just,
And perish there, as all presumption must.

Peace be to those (such peace as earth can give)
Who live in pleasure, dead e'en while they live;
Born capable, indeed, of heavenly truth,
But down to latest age, from earliest youth,
Their mind a wilderness through want of care,
The plough of wisdom never entering there.
Peace (if insensibility may claim
A right to the meek honours of her name)
To men of pedigree, their noble race,
Emulous always of the nearest place
To any throne, except the throne of grace.
Let cottagers and unenlightened swains
Revere the laws they dream that heaven ordains;
Resort on Sunday to the house of prayer,
And ask, and fancy they find, blessings there.
Themselves, perhaps, when weary they retreat
To enjoy cool nature in a country seat,
To exchange the centre of a thousand trades,
For clumps, and lawns, and temples, and cascades,
May now and then their velvet cushions take,
And seem to pray for good example sake;
Judging, in charity, no doubt, the town
Pious enough, and having need of none.
Kind souls! to teach their tenantry to prize
What they themselves, without remorse, despise:
Nor hope have they, nor fear of aught to come,
As well for them had prophecy been dumb;
They could have held the conduct they pursue,
Had Paul of Tarsus lived and died a Jew;
And truth proposed to reasoners wise as they
Is a pearl cast—completely cast away.



They die.—Death lends them, pleased and as in sport,
 All the grim honours of his ghastly court.
 Far other paintings grace the chamber now,
 Where late we saw the mimic landscape glow ;
 The busy heralds hang the sable scene
 With mournful scutcheons, and dim lamps between ;
 Proclaim their titles to the crowd around,
 But they that wore them move not at the sound ;
 The coronet, placed idly at their head,
 Adds nothing now to the degraded dead ;

And e'en the star that glitters on the bier
Can only say—Nobility lies here.
Peace to all such—'twere pity to offend,
By useless censure, whom we cannot mend :
Life without hope can close but in despair,
'Twas there we found them, and must leave them there. .

As when two pilgrims in a forest stray,
Both may be lost, yet each in his own way ;
So fares it with the multitudes beguiled
In vain opinion's waste and dangerous wild ;
Ten thousand rove the brakes and thorns among,
Some eastward, and some westward, and all wrong.
But here, alas ! the fatal difference lies,
Each man's belief is right in his own eyes ;
And he that blames what they have blindly chose,
Incurs resentment for the love he shows.

Say, botanist, within whose province fall
The cedar and the hyssop on the wall,
Of all that deck the lanes, the fields, the bowers,
What parts the kindred tribes of weeds and flowers !
Sweet scent, or lovely form, or both combined,
Distinguish every cultivated kind ;
The want of both denotes a meaner breed,
And Chloe from her garland picks the weed.
Thus hopes of every sort, whatever sect
Esteem them, sow them, rear them, and protect,
If wild in nature, and not duly found,
Gethsemane ! in thy dear hallowed ground,
That cannot bear the blaze of Scripture light,
Nor cheer the spirit, nor refresh the sight,
Nor animate the soul to Christian deeds,
(Oh cast them from thee !) are weeds, arrant weeds.

Ethelred's house, the centre of six ways,
Diverging each from each, like equal rays,
Himself as bountiful as April rains, *
Lord paramount of the surrounding plains,
Would give relief of bed and board to none,
But guests that sought it in the appointed One ;

And they might enter at his open door,
 Even till his spacious hall would hold no more.
 He sent a servant forth by every road,
 To sound his horn and publish it abroad,
 That all might mark—knight, menial, high and low—
 An ordinance it concerned them much to know.
 If after all some headstrong hardy lout
 Would disobey, though sure to be shut out,
 Could he with reason murmur at his case,
 Himself sole author of his own disgrace?
 No! the decree was just and without flaw;
 And he that made had right to make the law;
 His sovereign power and pleasure unrestrained,
 The wrong was his who wrongfully complained.

Yet half mankind maintain a churlish strife
 With him, the donor of eternal life,
 Because the deed, by which his love confirms
 The largess he bestows, prescribes the terms.
 Compliance with his will your lot ensures,
 Accept it only, and the boon is yours.
 And sure it is as kind to smile and give,
 As, with a frown, to say, Do this, and live.
 Love is not pedler's trumpery, bought and sold;
 He will give freely, or he will withhold;
 His soul abhors a mercenary thought,
 And him as deeply who abhors it not;
 He stipulates indeed, but merely this,
 That man will freely take an unbought bliss—
 Will trust him for a faithful generous part,
 Nor set a price upon a willing heart.
 Of all the ways that seem to promise fair,
 To place you where his saints his presence share,
 This only can; for this plain cause expressed,
 In terms as plain, himself has shut the rest.
 But O the strife, the bickering, and debate,
 The tidings of unpurchased heaven create!
 The flirtd fan, the bridle, and the toss,
 All speakers, yet all language at a loss.

From stuccoed walls smart arguments rebound ;
 And beaux, adept in everything profound,
 Die of disdain, or whistle off the sound.
 Such is the clamour of rooks, daws, and kites,
 The explosion of the levelled tube excites,
 Where mouldering abbey-walls o'erhang the glade,
 And oaks coeval spread a mournful shade,
 The screaming nations, hovering in mid air,
 Loudly resent the stranger's freedom there,
 And seem to warn him never to repeat
 His bold intrusion on their dark retreat.

Adieu ! Vinosà cries, ere yet he sips
 The purple bumper trembling at his lips—
 Adieu to all morality ! if grace
 Make works a vain ingredient in the case.
 The Christian hope is—Waiter, draw the cork—
 If I mistake not—Blockhead ! with a fork !
 Without good works, whatever some may boast,
 Mere folly and delusion—Sir, your toast.
 My firm persuasion is, at least sometimes,
 That Heaven will weigh man's virtues and his crimes,
 With nice attention, in a righteous scale,
 And save or damn as these or those prevail.
 I plant my foot upon this ground of trust,
 And silence every fear with—God is just.
 But if perchance on some dull drizzling day
 A thought intrude, that says, or seems to say,
 If thus the important cause is to be tried,
 Suppose the beam should dip on the wrong side,
 I soon recover from these needless frights,
 And God is merciful—sets all to rights.
 Thus between justice, as my prime support,
 And mercy fled to as the last resort,
 I glide and steal along with heaven in view,
 And—pardon me, the bottle stands with you.

I never will believe, the colonel cries,
 The sanguinary schemes that some devise,

Who make the good Creator, on their plan,
 A being of less equity than man.
 If appetite, or what divines call lust,
 Which men comply with e'en because they must,
 Be punished with perdition, who is pure?
 Then theirs, no doubt, as well as mine, is sure.
 If sentence of eternal pain belong
 To every sudden slip and transient wrong,
 Then Heaven enjoins the fallible and frail
 A hopeless task, and damns them if they fail.
 My creed (whatever some creed-makers mean
 By Athanasian nonsense, or Niceno),
 My creed is, he is safe that does his best,
 And death's a doom sufficient for the rest.
 Right, says an ensign; and, for aught I see,
 Your faith and mine substantially agree;
 The best of every man's performance here
 Is to discharge the duties of his sphere.
 A lawyer's dealings should be just and fair,
 Honesty shines with great advantage there.
 Fasting and prayer sit well upon a priest,
 A decent caution and reserve at least.
 A soldier's best is courage in the field,
 With nothing here that wants to be concealed;
 Manly deportment, gallant, easy, gay;
 A hand as liberal as the light of day.
 The soldier thus endowed who never shrinks,
 Nor closets up his thoughts, whate'er he thinks,
 Who scorns to do an injury by stealth,
 Must go to heaven—and I must drink his health.
 Sir Smug, he cries (for lowest at the board,
 Just made fifth chaplain of his patron lord,
 His shoulders witnessing by many a shrug
 How much his feelings suffered, sat Sir Smug),
 Your office is to winnow false from true;
 Come, prophet, drink, and tell us, What think you?
 Sighing and smiling as he takes his glass,
 Which they that woo preferment rarely pass—

Fallible man, the church-bred youth replies,
 Is still found fallible, however wise ;
 And differing judgments serve but to declare,
 That truth lies somewhere, if we knew but where.
 Of all it ever was my lot to read,
 Of critics now alive or long since dead,
 The book of all the world that charmed me most
 Was—well-a-day, the title-page was lost !—
The writer well remarks, a heart, that knows
To take with gratitude what Heaven bestows,
 With prudence always ready at our call,
 To guide our use of it, is all in all.
 Doubtless it is. To which, of my own store,
 I superadd a few essentials more ;
 But these, excuse the liberty I take,
 I waive just now, for conversation's sake.
 —Spoke like an oracle, they all exclaim,
 And add Right Reverend to Smug's honoured name.

And yet our lot is given us in a land
 Where busy arts are never at a stand :
 Where science points her telescopic eye,
 Familiar with the wonders of the sky ;
 Where bold inquiry, diving out of sight,
 Brings many a precious pearl of truth to light ;
 Where nought eludes the persevering quest,
 That fashion, taste, or luxury suggest

But above all, in her own light arrayed,
 See Mercy's grand apocalypse displayed !
 The sacred book no longer suffers wrong,
 Bound in the fetters of an unknown tongue ;
 But speaks with plainness art could never mend,
 What simplest minds can soonest comprehend.
 God gives the word, the preachers throng around,
 Live from his lips, and spread the glorious sound :
 That sound bespeaks salvation on her way,
 The trumpet of a life-restoring day ;
 'Tis heard where England's Eastern glory shines,
 And in the gulfs of her Cornubian mines.



And still it spreads. See Germany send forth
 Her sons * to pour it on the farthest north :
 Fired with a zeal peculiar, they defy
 The rage and rigour of a polar sky,
 And plant successfully sweet Sharon's rose
 On icy plains, and in eternal snows.

O blest within the enclosure of your rocks,
 Nor herds have ye to ~~boast~~^{feed}, nor bleating flocks ;
 Nor fertilizing streams your fields divide,
 That show reversed the villas on their side ;
 No groves have ye ; nor cheerful sound of bird,
 Or voice of turtle in your land is heard ;
 Nor grateful eglantine regales the smell
 Of those that walk at evening where ye dwell ;
 But winter, armed with terrors here unknown,
 Sits absolute on his unshaken throne ;
 Piles up his stores amidst the frozen waste,
 And bids the mountains he has built stand fast ;

* The Moravian Missionaries in Greenland.—See Krantz.

Beckons the legions of his storms away
From happier scenes, to make your land a prey ;
Proclaims the soil a conquest he has won,
And scorns to share it with the distant sun.
—Yet truth is yours, remote, unenvied isle !
And peace, the genuine offspring of her smile ;
The pride of lettered ignorance, that binds
In chains of error our accomplished minds,
That decks, 'with all the splendour of the true—
A false religion—is unknown to you.
Nature, indeed, vouchsafes for our delight
The sweet vicissitudes of day and night ;
Soft airs and genial moisture feed and cheer
Field, fruit, and flower, and every creature here :
But brighter beams than his who fires the skies,
Have risen at length on your admiring eyes,
That shoot into your darkest caves the day,
From which our nicer optics turn away.

Here see the encouragement grace gives to vice,
The dire effect of mercy without price !
What were they ? What some fools are made by art,
They were by nature—atheists, head and heart.
The gross idolatry blind heathens teach
Was too refined for them, beyond their reach.
Not e'en the glorious sun, though men revere
The monarch most that seldom will appear,
And though his beams, that quicken where they shine,
May claim some right to be esteemed divine,
Not e'en the sun, desirable as rare,
Could bend one knee, engage one votary there ;
They were, what base credulity believes
True Christians are, dissemblers, drunkards, thieves.
The full gorged savage, at his nauseous feast
Spent half the darkness, and snored out the rest,
Was one, when justice, on an equal plan
Denouncing death upon the sins of man,
Might also have indulged with an escape,
Chargeable only with a human shape.

What are they now?—Morality may spare
Her grave concern, her kind suspicions there ;
The wretch, who once sang wildly, danced, and laughed,
And sucked in dizzy madness with his draught,
Has wept a silent flood, reversed his ways,
Is sober, meek, benevolent, and prays,
Feeds sparingly, communicates his store,
Abhors the craft he boasted of before,
And he that stole has learned to steal no more.
Well spake the prophet, Let the desert sing,
Where sprang the thorn the spiry fir shall spring,
And where unsightly and rank thistles grew,
Shall grow the myrtle and luxuriant yew.

Go now, and with important tone demand
On what foundation virtue is to stand,
If self-exalting claims be turned adrift,
And grace be grace indeed, and life a gift ;
The poor reclaimed inhabitant, his eyes
Glistening at once with pity and surprise,
Amazed that shadows should obscure the sight
Of one, whose birth was in a land of light,
Shall answer, Hope, sweet Hope, has set me free,
And made all pleasures, else mere dross to me.

These, amidst scenes as waste as if denied
The common care that waits on all beside,
Wild, as if nature there, void of all good,
Played only gambols in a frantic mood
(Yet charge not heavenly skill with having planned
A plaything world, unworthy of his hand) ;
Can see his love, though secret evil lurks
In all we touch, stamped plainly on his works ;
Deem life a blessing with its numerous woes,
Nor spurn away a gift a God bestows.
Hard task indeed, o'er arctic seas to roam !
Is hope exotic ? grows it not at home ?
Yes, but an object, bright as orient morn,
May press the eye too closely to be borne ;

A distant virtue we can all confess,
It hurts our pride, and moves our envy less.

*Leuconomus (beneath well-sounding Greek
I slur a name a poet must not speak)
Stood pilloried on infamy's high stage,
And bore the pelting scorn of half an age ;
The very butt of slander, and the blot
For every dart that malice ever shot.
The man that mentioned him at once dismissed
All mercy from his lips, and sneered and hissed ;
His crimes were such as Sodom never knew,
And perjury stood up to swear all true ;
His aim was mischief, and his zeal pretence,
His speech rebellion against common sense ;
A knave, when tried on honesty's plain rule ;
And when by that of reason, a mere fool :
The world's best comfort was, his doom was past ;
Die when he might, he must be damned at last.*

Now, Truth, perform thine office ; waft aside
The curtain drawn by prejudice and pride ;
Reveal (the man is dead) to wondering eyes
This more than monster in his proper guise.
He loved the world that hated him : the tear
That dropped upon his Bible was sincere ;
Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was a blameless life ;
And he that forged, and he that threw the dart,
Had each a brother's interest in his heart.
Paul's love of Christ, and steadiness unbribed,
Were copied close in him, and well transcribed.
He followed Paul ; his zeal a kindred flame,
His apostolic charity the same.
Like him, crossed cheerfully tempestuous seas,
Forsaking country, kindred, friends and ease ;
Like him he laboured, and like him content
To bear it, suffered shame where'er he went.
Blush, calumny ! and write upon his tomb,
If honest eulogy can spare thee room,

✓ Thy deep repentance of thy thousand lies,
Which, aimed at him, have pierced the offended skies;
And say, Blot out my sin, confessed, deplored,
Against thine image in thy saint, O Lord!

No blinder bigot, I maintain it still,
Than he who must have pleasure, come what will;
He laughs, whatever weapon truth may draw,
And deems her sharp artillery mere straw.
Scripture, indeed, is plain; but God and he
On Scripture ground are sure to disagree;
Some wiser rule must teach him how to live,
Than this his Maker has seen fit to give;
Supple and flexible as Indian cane,
To take the bend his appetites ordain;
Contrived to suit frail nature's crazy case,
And reconcile his lusts with saving grace.
By this, with nice precision of design,
He draws upon life's map a zig-zag line,
That shows how far 'tis safe to follow sin,
And where his danger and God's wrath begin.
By this he forms, as pleased he sports along,
His well-poised estimate of right and wrong;
And finds the modish manners of the day,
Though loose, as harmless as an infant's play.

Build by whatever plan caprice decrees,
With what materials, on what ground you please;
Your hope shall stand unblamed, perhaps admired,
If not that hope the Scripture has required.
The strange conceits, vain projects, and wild dreams,
With which hypocrisy for ever teems
(Though other follies strike the public eye,
And raise a laugh), pass unmolested by;
But if, unblamable in word and thought,
A MAN arise, a man whom God has taught,
With all Elijah's dignity of tone,
And all the love of the beloved John,
To storm the citadels they build in air,
And smite the untempered wall; 'tis death to spare.

To sweep away all refuges of lies,
And place, instead of quirks themselves devise,
LAMA SABACTHANI before their eyes ;
To prove that without Christ all gain is loss.
All hope despair, that stands not on his cross ;
Except the few his God may have impressed,
A tenfold frenzy seizes all the rest.

Throughout mankind, the Christian kind at least,
There dwells a consciousness in every breast,
That folly ends where genuine hope begins,
And he that finds his heaven must lose his sins.
Nature opposes with her utmost force
This riving stroke, this ultimate divorce ;
And, while religion seems to be her view,
Hates with a deep sincerity the true :
For this, of all that ever influenced man,
Since Abel worshipped, or the world began,
This only spares no lust, admits no plea,
But makes him, if at all, completely free ;
Sounds forth the signal, as she mounts her car,
Of an eternal, universal war ;
Rejects all treaty, penetrates all wiles,
Scorns with the same indifference frowns and smiles ;
Drives through the realms of sin, where riot reels,
And grinds his crown beneath her burning wheels !
Hence, all that is in man, pride, passion, art,
Powers of the mind, and feelings of the heart,
Insensible of truth's almighty charms,
Starts at her first approach, and sounds to arms !
While bigotry, with well-dissembled fears,
His eyes shut fast, his fingers in his ears,
Mighty to parry and push by God's Word
With senseless noise, his argument the sword,
Pretends a zeal for godliness and grace,
And spits abhorrence in the Christian's face.

Parent of Hope, immortal Truth ! make known
Thy deathless wreaths and triumphs, all thine own.

The silent progress of thy power is such,
 Thy means so feeble, and despised so much,
 That few believe the wonders thou has wrought,
 And none can teach them but whom thou has taught.
 Oh see me sworn to serve thee, and command
 A painter's skill into a poet's hand,
 That, while I trembling trace a work divine,
 Fancy may stand aloof from the design,
 And light, and shade, and every stroke be thine.

If ever thou hast felt another's pain,
 If ever when he sighed hast sighed again,
 If ever on thy eyelid stood the tear
 That pity had engendered, drop one here.
 This man was happy—had the world's good word,
 And with it every joy it can afford;
Friendship and love seemed tenderly at strife,
 Which most should sweeten his untroubled life;
 Politely learned, and of a gentle race,
 Good breeding and good sense gave all a grace;
 And whether at the toilet of the fair
 He laughed and trifled, made him welcome there;
 Or if in masculine debate he shared,
 Ensured him mute attention and regard.
 Alas, how changed! Expressive of his mind,
 His eyes are sunk, arms folded, head reclined;
 Those awful syllables, hell, death, and sin,
 Though whispered, plainly tell what works within;
 That conscience there performs her proper part,
 And writes a doomsday sentence on his heart!
 Forsaking, and forsaken of all friends,
 He now perceives where earthly pleasure ends;
 Hard task! for one who lately knew no care,
 And harder still, as learnt beneath despair;
 His hours no longer pass unmarked away,
 A dark importance saddens every day;
 He hears the notice of the clock, perplexed,
 And cries, Perhaps eternity strikes next!

Sweet music is no longer music here,
And laughter sounds like madness in his ear :
His grief the world of all her power disarms ;
Wine has no taste, and beauty has no charms :
God's holy Word, once trivial in his view,
Now by the voice of his experience true,
Seems, as it is, the fountain whence alone
Must spring that hope he pants to make his own.

Now let the bright reverse be known abroad ;
Say man's a worm, and power belongs to God.



As when a felon, whom his country's laws
Have justly doomed for some atrocious cause,
Expects in darkness and heart-chilling fears
The shameful close of all his misspent years ;
If chance, on heavy pinions slowly borne,
A tempest usher in the dreaded morn,

Upon his dungeon walls the lightning play,
 The thunder seems to summon him away,
 The warder at the door his key applies,
 Shoots back the bolt, and all his courage dies ;
 If then, just then, all thoughts of mercy lost,
 When hope, long lingering, at last yields the ghost,
 The sound of pardon pierce his startled ear,
 He drops at once his fetters and his fear ;
 A transport glows in all he looks and speaks,
 And the first thankful tears bedew his cheeks.
 Joy, far superior joy, that much outweighs
 The comfort of a few poor added days,
 Invades, possesses, and o'erwhelms the soul
 Of him whom hope has with a touch made whole.



'Tis heaven, all heaven descending on the wings
 Of the glad legions of the King of kings ;

'Tis more—'tis God diffused through every part,
'Tis God himself triumphant in his heart.
O welcome now the sun's once hated light,
His noonday beams were never half so bright.
Not kindred minds alone are called to employ
Their hours, their days, in listening to his joy;
Unconscious nature, all that he surveys—
Rocks, groves, and streams—must join him in his praise.

These are thy glorious works, eternal Truth,
The scoff of withered age and beardless youth;
These move the censure and illiberal grin
Of fools that hate thee and delight in sin:
But these shall last when night has quenched the pole,
And heaven is all departed as a scroll.
And when, as justice has long since decreed,
This earth shall blaze, and a new world succeed,
Then these thy glorious works, and they who share
That hope which can alone exclude despair,
Shall live exempt from weakness and decay,
The brightest wonders of an endless day.

Happy the bard (if that fair name belong
To him that blends no fable with his song),
Whose lines uniting, by an honest art,
The faithful monitor's and poet's part,
Seek to delight that they may mend mankind,
And while they captivate, inform the mind:
Still happier, if he till a thankful soil,
And fruit reward his honourable toil:
But happier far, who comfort those that wait
To hear plain truth at Judah's hallowed gate:
Their language simple, as their manners meek,
No shining ornaments have they to seek:
Nor labour they, nor time nor talents waste,
In sorting flowers to suit a fickle taste;
But while they speak the wisdom of the skies,
Which art can only darken and disguise,
The abundant harvest, recompense divine,
Repays their work—the gleanings only mine.



CHARITY.

Quo nihil majus meliusve terris
Fata donavère, bonique divi;
Nec dabunt, quamvis redeant in aurum
Tempora priscum.

HOR., *Lib. iv., Ode 2.*

FAIREST and foremost of the train that wait
On man's most dignified and happiest state,
Whether we name thee Charity or Love,
Chief grace below, and all in all above,
Prosper (I press thee with a powerful plea)
A task I venture on impelled by thee :
Oh never seen but in thy blest effects,
Or felt but in the soul that Heaven selects ;
Who seeks to praise thee, and to make thee known
To other hearts, must have thee in his own.
Come, prompt me with benevolent desires,
Teach me to kindle at thy gentle fires,
And, though disgraced and slighted, to redeem
A poet's name, by making thee the theme !
God, working ever on a social plan,
By various ties attaches man to man :
He made at first, though free and unconfined,
One man, the common father of the kind ;
That every tribe, though placed as he sees best,
Where seas or deserts part them from the rest,
Differing in language, manners, or in face,
Might feel themselves allied to all the race,
When Cook—lamented, and with tears as just
As ever mingled with heroic dust—

Steered Britain's oak into a world unknown,
And in his country's glory sought his own,
Wherever he found man, to nature true,
The rights of man were sacred in his view;
He soothed with gifts, and greeted with a smile
The simple native of the new-found isle;
He spurned the wretch that slighted or withstood
The tender argument of kindred blood;
Nor would endure, that any should control
His freeborn brethren of the southern pole.

But though some nobler minds a law respect,
That none shall with impunity neglect,
In baser souls unnumbered evils meet
To thwart its influence, and its end defeat.
While Cook is loved for savage lives he saved,
See Cortez odious for a world enslaved!
Where wast thou then, sweet Charity? where then,
Thou tutelary friend of helpless men?
Wast thou in monkish cells and nunneries found,
Or building hospitals on English ground?
No; Mammon makes the world his legatee
Through fear, not love; and Heaven abhors the fee.
Wherever found (and all men need thy care),
Nor age nor infancy could find thee there.
The hand that slew till it could slay no more
Was glued to the sword hilt with Indian gore.
Their prince, as justly seated on his throne
As vain imperial Philip on his own,
Tricked out of all his royalty by art,
That stripped him bare, and broke his honest heart.
Died, by the sentence of a shaven priest,
For scorning what they taught him to detest.
How dark the veil that intercepts the blaze
Of Heaven's mysterious purposes and ways;
God stood not, though he seemed to stand, aloof;
And at this hour the conqueror feels the proof:
The wreath he won drew down an instant curse,
The fretting plague is in the public purse,

The cankered spoil corrodes the pining state,
Starved by that indolence their mines create.

Oh could their ancient Incas rise again,
How would they take up Israel's taunting strain !
Art thou too fallen, Iberia ? Do we see
The robber and the murderer weak as we ?
Thou, that hast wasted earth, and dared despise
Alike the wrath and mercy of the skies,
Thy pomp is in the grave, thy glory laid
Low in the pits thine avarice has made.

We come with joy from our eternal rest
To see the oppressor in his turn oppressed.
Art thou the god, the thunder of whose hand
Rolled over all our desolated land,
Shook principalities and kingdoms down,
And made the mountains tremble at his frown ?
The sword shall light upon thy boasted powers,
And waste them, as thy sword has wasted ours.
'Tis thus Omnipotence his law fulfils,
And vengeance executes what justice wills.

Again—the band of commerce was designed
To associate all the branches of mankind ;
And if a boundless plenty be the robe,
Trade is the golden girdle of the globe.
Wise to promote whatever end he means,
God opens fruitful nature's various scenes :
Each climate needs what other climes produce,
And offers something to the general use ;
No land but listens to the common call,
And in return receives supply from all.
This genial intercourse and mutual aid
Cheers what were else a universal shade,
Calls nature from her ivy-mantled den,
And softens human rock-work into men.
Ingenious art, with her expressive face,
Steps forth to fashion and refine the race ;
Not only fills necessity's demand,
But overcharges her capacious hand :

Capricious taste itself can crave no more
Than she supplies from her abounding store :
She strikes out all that luxury can ask,
And gains new vigour at her endless task.
Hers is the spacious arch, the shapely spire,
The painter's pencil, and the poet's lyre ;
From her the canvass borrows light and shade,
And verse, more lasting, hues that never fade.
She guides the finger o'er the dancing keys,
Gives difficulty all the grace of ease,
And pours a torrent of sweet notes around,
Fast as the thirsting ear can drink the sound.

These are the gifts of art ; and art thrives most
Where commerce has enriched the busy coast :
He catches all improvements in his flight,
Spreads foreign wonders in his country's sight,
Imports what others have invented well,
And stirs his own to match them or excel.
'Tis thus, reciprocating each with each,
Alternately the nations learn and teach ;
While Providence enjoins to every soul
A union with the vast terraqueous whole.

Heaven speed the canvass, gallantly unfurled
To furnish and accommodate a world,
To give the pole the produce of the sun,
And knit the unsocial climates into one.
Soft airs and gentle heavings of the wave
Impel the fleet, whose errand is to save,
To succour wasted regions, and replace
The smile of opulence in sorrow's face.
Let nothing adverse, nothing unforeseen,
Impede the bark that ploughs the deep serene,
Charged with a freight transcending in its worth
The gems of India, Nature's rarest birth,
That flies, like Gabriel on his Lord's commands,
A herald of God's love to pagan lands.
But ah ! what wish can prosper, or what prayer,
For merchants rich in cargoes of despair,

Who drive a loathsome traffic, gauge, and span,
 And buy the muscles and the bones of man !
 The tender ties of father, husband, friend,
 All bonds of nature in that moment end ;
 And each endures, while yet he draws his breath,
 A stroke as fatal as the scythe of death.
 The sable warrior, frantic with regret
 Of her he loves, and never can forget,
 Loses in tears the far-receding shore,
 But not the thought that they must meet no more ;
 Deprived of her and freedom at a blow,
 What has he left that he can yet forego ?
 Yes, to deep sadness sullenly resigned,
 He feels his body's bondage in his mind ;
 Puts off his generous nature ; and, to suit
 His manners with his fate, puts on the brute

O most degrading of all ills that wait
 On man, a mourner in his best estate !
 All other sorrows virtue may endure,
 And find submission more than half a cure ;
 Grief is itself a medicine, and bestowed
 To improve the fortitude that bears the load—
 To teach the wanderer, as his woes increase,
 The path of wisdom, all whose paths are peace.
 But slavery !—Virtue dreads it as her grave :
 Patience itself is meanness in a slave ;
 Or if the will and sovereignty of God
 Bid suffer it awhile, and kiss the rod,
 Wait for the dawning of a brighter day,
 And snap the chain the moment when you may.
 Nature imprints upon whate'er we see,
 That has a heart and life in it, Be free !
 The beasts are chartered—neither age nor force
 Can quell the love of freedom in a horse :
 He breaks the cord that held him at the rack ;
 And, conscious of an unencumbered back,
 Snuffs up the morning air, forgets the rein :
 Loose fly his forelock and his ample mane ;

Responsive to the distant neigh he neighs,
Nor stops till, overleaping all delays,
He finds the pasture where his fellows graze.

Canst thou, and honoured with a Christian name,
Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame?
Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead
Expedience as a warrant for the deed?
So may the wolf, whom famine has made bold
To quit the forest and invade the fold:
So may the ruffian, who with ghostly glide,
Dagger in hand, steals close to your bedside;
Not he, but his emergence, forced the door,
He found it inconvenient to be poor.
Has God then given its sweetness to the cane,
Unless his laws be trampled on, in vain?
Built a brave world, which cannot yet subsist,
Unless his right to rule it be dismissed?
Impudent blasphemy! So folly pleads,
And, avarice being judge, with ease succeeds.

But grant the plea, and let it stand for just,
That man make man his prey, because he must;
Still there is room for pity to abate
And soothe the sorrows of so sad a state.
A Briton knows, or if he knows it not,
The Scripture placed within his reach, he ought,
That souls have no discriminating hue,
Alike important in their Maker's view;
That none are free from blemish since the fall,
And love divine has paid one price for all.
The wretch that works and weeps without relief,
Has one that notices his silent grief.
He from whose hands alone all power proceeds,
Ranks its abuse among the foulest deeds;
Considers all injustice with a frown,
But marks the man that treads his fellow down.
Begone—the whip and bell in that hard hand
Are hateful ensigns of usurped command.

Not Mexico could purchase kings a claim
To scourge him, weariness his only blame.
Remember, Heaven has an avenging rod ;
To smite the poor is treason against God.

Trouble is grudgingly and hardly brooked,
While life's sublimest joys are overlooked :
We wander o'er a sunburnt thirsty soil,
Murmuring and weary of our daily toil,
Forget to enjoy the palm-tree's offered shade,
Or taste the fountain in the neighbouring glade ;
Else who would lose, that had the power to improve,
The occasion of transmitting fear to love !
O 'tis a godlike privilege to save,
And he that scorns it is himself a slave.
Inform his mind ; one flash of heavenly day
Would heal his heart, and melt his chains away.
" Beauty for ashes " is a gift indeed,
And slaves, by truth enlarged, are doubly freed.
Then would he say, submissive at thy feet,
While gratitude and love made service sweet—
My dear deliverer out of hopeless night,
Whose bounty bought me but to give me light,
I was a bondman on my native plain,
Sin forged, and ignorance made fast, the chain ;
Thy lips have shed instruction as the dew,
Taught me what path to shun, and what pursue ;
Farewell, my former joys ! I sigh no more
For Africa's once loved, benighted shore ;
Serving a benefactor, I am free ;
At my best home, if not exiled from thee.

Some men make gain a fountain, whence proceeds
A stream of liberal and heroic deeds ;
The swell of pity, not to be confined
Within the scanty limits of the mind,
Disdains the bank, and throws the golden sands,
A rich deposit, on the bordering lands ;
These have an ear for His paternal call,
Who makes some rich for the supply of all ;

God's gift with pleasure in his praise employ ;
And Thornton is familiar with the joy.

O could I worship ought beneath the skies
That earth has seen, or fancy can devise,
Thine altar, sacred Liberty, should stand,
Built, by no mercenary vulgar hand,
With fragrant turf, and flowers as wild and fair
As ever dress'd a bank, or scented summer air.
Duly, as ever on the mountain's height
The peep of morning shed a dawning light ;
Again, when evening in her sober vest,
Drew the gay curtain of the fading west,
My soul should yield thee willing thanks and praise
For the chief blessings of my fairest days :
But that were sacrilege—praise is not thine,
But His who gave thee, and preserves thee mine :
Else I would say, and as I spake bid fly
A captive bird into the boundless sky,
This triple realm adores thee—thou art come
From Sparta hither, and art here at home.
We feel thy force still active, at this hour
Enjoy immunity from priestly power,
While conscience, happier than in ancient years,
Owns no superior but the God she fears.
Propitious spirit ! yet expunge a wrong
Thy rights have suffered, and our land, too long.
Teach mercy to ten thousand hearts, that share
The fears and hopes of a commercial care.
Prisons expect the wicked, and were built
To bind the lawless, and to punish guilt ;
But shipwreck, earthquake, battle, fire, and flood
Are mighty mischiefs, not to be withstood ;
And honest merit stands on slippery ground,
Where covert guile and artifice abound.
Let just restraint, for public peace designed,
Chain up the wolves and tigers of mankind ;
The foe of virtue has no claim to thee,
But let insolvent innocence go free.



Patron of else the most despised of men,
 Accept the tribute of a stranger's pen ;
 Verse, like the laurel, its immortal meed
 Should be the guerdon of a noble deed ;
 I may alarm thee, but I fear the shame
 (Charity chosen as my theme and aim)
 I must incur, forgetting Howard's name.
 Blest with all wealth can give thee, to resign
 Joys doubly sweet to feelings quick as thine,

To quit the bliss thy rural scenes bestow,
To seek a nobler amidst scenes of woe,
To traverse seas, range kingdoms, and bring home,
Not the proud monuments of Greece or Rome,
But knowledge such as only dungeons teach,
And only sympathy like thine could reach ;
That grief, sequestered from the public stage,
Might smooth her feathers, and enjoy her cage ;
Speaks a divine ambition, and a zeal
The boldest patriot might be proud to feel.
O that the voice of clamour and debate,
That pleads for peace till it disturbs the state,
Were hushed in favour of thy generous plea,
The poor thy clients, and Heaven's smile thy fee !
Philosophy, that does not dream or stray,
Walks arm in arm with nature all his way ;
Compasses earth, dives into it, ascends
Whatever steep inquiry recommends ;
Sees planetary wonders smoothly roll
Round other systems under her control ;
Drinks wisdom at the milky stream of light,
That cheers the silent journey of the night ;
And brings at his return a bosom charged
With rich instruction, and a soul enlarged.
The treasured sweets of the capacious plan
That Heaven spreads wide before the view of man,
All prompt his pleased pursuit, and to pursue
Still prompt him, with a pleasure always new ;
He too has a connecting power, and draws
Man to the centre of the common cause,
Aiding a dubious and deficient sight
With a new medium and a purer light.
All truth is precious, if not all divine ;
And what dilates the powers must needs refine.
He reads the skies, and, watching every change,
Provides the faculties an ampler range ;
And wins mankind, as his attempts prevail,
A prouder station on the general scale.

But reason still, unless divinely taught,
Whate'er she learns, learns nothing as she ought ;
The lamp of revelation only shows,
What human wisdom cannot but oppose,
That man, in nature's richest mantle clad,
And graced with all philosophy can add,
Though fair without, and luminous within,
Is still the progeny and heir of sin.
Thus taught, down falls the plumage of his pride ;
He feels his need of an unerring guide,
And knows that, falling, he shall rise no more,
Unless the power that bade him stand restore.
This is indeed philosophy ; this known,
Makes wisdom, worthy of the name, his own ;
And without this, whatever he discuss—
Whether the space between the stars and us,
Whether he measure earth, compute the sea,
Weigh sunbeams, carve a fly, or split a flea—
The solemn trifler, with his boasted skill,
Toils much, and is a solemn trifler still :
Blind was he born, and his misguided eyes,
Grown dim in trifling studies, blind he dies.
; Self-knowledge, truly learned, of course implies
The rich possession of a nobler prize ;
For self to self, and God to man revealed
(Two themes to nature's eye for ever sealed),
Are taught by rays, that fly with equal pace
From the same centre of enlightening grace.
Here stay thy foot ; how copious, and how clear,
The o'erflowing well of Charity springs here !
Hark ! 'tis the music of a thousand rills,
Some through the groves, some down the sloping hills,
Winding a secret or an open course,
And all supplied from an eternal source.
The ties of nature do but feebly bind,
And commerce partially reclaims mankind ;
Philosophy, without his heavenly guide,
May blow up self-conceit, and nourish pride ;

But, while his province is the reasoning part,
Has still a veil of midnight on his heart :
'Tis truth divine, exhibited on earth,
Gives Charity her being and her birth.

Suppose (when thought is warm, and fancy flows,
What will not argument sometimes suppose ?)
An isle possessed by creatures of our kind,
Endued with reason, yet by nature blind.
Let supposition lend her aid once more,
And land some grave optician on the shore ;
He claps his lens, if haply they may see,
Close to the part where vision ought to be ;
But finds that, though his tubes assist the sight,
They cannot give it, or make darkness light.
He reads wise lectures, and describes aloud
A sense they know not, to the wondering crowd ;
He talks of light and the prismatic hues,
As men of depth in erudition use ;
But all he gains for his harangue is—Well,
What monstrous lies some travellers will tell !

The soul, whose sight all-quickenning grace renews,
Takes the resemblance of the good she views,
As diamonds, stripped of their opaque disguise,
Reflect the noonday glory of the skies.
She speaks of him, her author, guardian, friend,
Whose love knew no beginning, knows no end,
In language warm as all that love inspires ;
And, in the glow of her intense desires,
Pants to communicate her noble fires.
She sees a world stark blind to what employs
Her eager thought, and feeds her flowing joys ;
Though wisdom hail them, heedless of her call,
Flies to save some, and feels a pang for all :
Herself as weak as her support is strong,
She feels that frailty she denied so long ;
And, from a knowledge of her own disease,
Learns to compassionate the sick she sees.

Here see, acquitted of all vain pretence,
The reign of genuine Charity commence.
Though scorn repay her sympathetic tears,
She still is kind, and still she perseveres ;
The truth she loves, a sightless world blaspheme,
'Tis childish dotage, a delirious dream !
The danger they discern not they deny,
Laugh at their only remedy, and die.
But still a soul thus touched can never cease,
Whoever threatens war, to speak of peace.
Pure in her aim, and in her temper mild,
Her wisdom seems the weakness of a child :
She makes excuses where she might condemn,
Reviled by those that hate her, prays for them ;
Suspicion lurks not in her artless breast,
The worst suggested, she believes the best ;
Not soon provoked, however stung and teased,
And, if perhaps made angry, soon appeased ;
She rather waives than will dispute her right,
And injured, makes forgiveness her delight.

Such was the portrait an apostle drew,
The bright original was one he knew ;
Heaven held his hand, the likeness must be true.

When one, that holds communion with the skies,
Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings ;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.
So when a ship, well freighted with the stores
The sun matures on India's spicy shores,
Has dropped her anchor, and her canvass furled,
In some safe haven of our western world,
'Twere vain inquiry to what port she went ;
The gale informs us, laden with the scent.

Some seek, when queasy conscience has its qualms,
To lull the painful malady with alms ;

But Charity not feigned intends alone
Another's good—theirs centres in their own ;
And, too short-lived to reach the realms of peace,
Must cease for ever when the poor shall cease.
Flavia, most tender of her own good name,
Is rather careless of her sister's fame :
Her superfluity the poor supplies,
But if she touch a character, it dies.
The seeming virtue weighed against the vice,
She deems all safe, for she has paid the price :
No charity but alms aught values she,
Except in porcelain on her mantle-tree.
How many deeds with which the world has rung,
From pride, in league with ignorance, have sprung !
But God o'errules all human follies still,
And bends the tough materials to his will.
A conflagration, or a wintry flood,
Has left some hundreds without home or food :
Extravagance and avarice shall subscribe,
While fame and self-complacence are the bribe.
The brief proclaimed, it visits every pew,
But first the squire's, a compliment but due :
With slow deliberation, he unties
His glittering purse, that envy of all eyes !
And, while the clerk just puzzles out the psalm,
Slides guinea behind guinea in his palm ;
Till finding, what he might have found before,
A smaller piece amidst the precious store,
Pinched close between his finger and his thumb.
He half exhibits, and then drops the sum.
Gold, to be sure !—Throughout the town 'tis told
How the good squire gives never less than gold.
From motives such as his, though not the best,
Springs in due time supply for the distressed :
Not less effectual than what love bestows,
Except that office clips it as it goes.
But lest I seem to sin against a friend,
And wound the grace I mean to recommend



(Though vice derided with a just design
 Implies no trespass against love divine),
 Once more I would adopt the graver style ;
 A teacher should be sparing of his smile.
 Unless a love of virtue light the flame,
 Satire is, more than those he brands, to blame ;
 He hides behind a magisterial air
 His own offences, and strips others bare ;
 Affects, indeed, a most humane concern,
 That men, if gently tutored, will not learn :

That mulish folly, not to be reclaimed
By softer methods, must be made ashamed ;
But (I might instance in St. Patrick's dean)
Too often rails to gratify his spleen.
Most satirists are indeed a public scourge ;
Their mildest physic is a farrier's purge ;
Their acrid temper turns, as soon as stirred,
The milk of their good purpose all to curd.
Their zeal begotten, as their works rehearse,
By lean despair upon an empty purse,
The wild assassins start into the street,
Prepared to poniard whomsoe'er they meet.
No skill in swordsmanship, however just,
Can be secure against a madman's thrust ;
And even virtue, so unfairly matched,
Although immortal, may be pricked or scratched.
When scandal has new minted an old lie,
Or taxed invention for a fresh supply,
'Tis called a satire, and the world appears
Gathering around it with erected ears :
A thousand names are tossed into the crowd ,
Some whispered softly, and some twanged aloud ;
Just as the sapience of an author's brain
Suggests it safe or dangerous to be plain.
Strange ! how the frequent interjected dash
Quickens a market, and helps off the trash ;
The important letters, that include the rest,
Serve as a key to those that are suppressed ;
Conjecture gripes the victims in his paw,
The world is charmed, and Scrib escapes the law.
So, when the cold damp shades of night prevail,
Worms may be caught by either head or tail ;
Forcibly drawn from many a close recess,
They meet with little pity, no redress ;
Plunged in the stream, they lodge upon the mud,
Food for the famished rovers of the flood.
All zeal for a reform, that gives offence
To peace and charity, is mere pretence :

A bold remark ; but which, if well applied,
 Would humble many a towering poet's pride.
 Perhaps the man was in a sportive fit,
 And had no other play-place for his wit ;
 Perhaps, enchanted with the love of fame,
 He sought the jewel in his neighbour's shame ;
 Perhaps—whatever end he might pursue—
 The cause of virtue could not be his view.
 At every stroke wit flashes in our eyes ;
 The turns are quick, the polished points surprise,
 But shine with cruel and tremendous charms,
 That, while they please, possess us with alarms ;
 So have I seen (and hastened to the sight
 On all the wings of holiday delight)
 Where stands that monument of ancient power,
 Named with emphatic dignity, the Tower,
 Guns, halberts, swords, and pistols, great and small,
 In starry forms disposed upon the wall :
 We wonder, as we gazing stand below,
 That brass and steel should make so fine a show ;
 But though we praise the exact designer's skill,
 Account them implements of mischief still.
 No works shall find acceptance in that day,
 When all disguises shall be rent away,
 That square not truly with the Scripture plan,
 Nor spring from love to God, or love to man.
 As He ordains things sordid in their birth
 To be resolved into their parent earth ;
 And, though the soul shall seek superior orbs,
 Whate'er this world produces, it absorbs ;
 So self starts nothing, but what tends apace
 Home to the goal, where it began the race.
 Such as our motive is our aim must be ;
 If this be servile, that can ne'er be free ;
 If self employ us, whatsoe'er is wrought,
 We glorify that self, not him we ought ;
 Such virtues had need prove their own reward,
 The Judge of all men owes them no regard.

True Charity, a plant divinely nursed,
Fed by the love from which it rose at first,
Thrives against hope, and, in the rudest scene,
Storms but enliven its unfading green ;
Exuberant is the shadow it supplies,
Its fruits on earth, its growth above the skies.
To look at him who formed us and redeemed,
So glorious now, though once so disesteemed ;
To see a God stretch forth his human hand,
To uphold the boundless scenes of his command ;
To recollect that, in a form like ours,
He bruised beneath his feet the infernal powers,
Captivity led captive, rose to claim
The wreath he won so dearly in our name ;
That, throned above all height, He condescends
To call the few that trust in him his friends ;
That, in the heaven of heavens, that space he deems
Too scanty for the exertion of his beams,
And shines, as if impatient to bestow
Life and a kingdom upon worms below ;
That sight imparts a never-dying flame,
Though feeble in degree, in kind the same.
Like him, the soul, thus kindled from above,
Spreads wide her arms of universal love ;
And, still enlarged as she receives the grace,
Includes creation in her close embrace.
Behold a Christian !—and without the ares
The Founder of that name alone inspires,
Though all accomplishment, all knowledge meet,
To make the shining prodigy complete,
Whoever boasts that name, behold a cheat !
Were love, in these the world's last dotting years,
As frequent as the want of it appears,
The churches warmed, they would no longer hold
Such frozen figures, stiff as they are cold ;
Relenting forms would lose their power, or cease ;
And e'en the dipped and sprinkled live in peace :

Each heart would quit its prison in the breast,
 And flow in free communion with the rest.
 The statesman, skilled in projects dark and deep,
 Might burn his useless Machiavel, and sleep ;
 His budget, often filled, yet always poor,
 Might swing at ease behind his study door,
 No longer prey upon our annual rents,
 Or scare the nation with its big contents :
 Disbanded legions freely might depart,
 And slaying man would cease to be an art.
 No learned disputants would take the field,
 Sure not to conquer, and sure not to yield ;
 Both sides deceived, if rightly understood,
 Pelting each other for the public good,
 Did Charity prevail, the press would prove
 A vehicle of virtue, truth, and love ;
 And I might spare myself the pains to show
 What few can learn, and all suppose they know.
 Thus have I sought to grace a serious lay
 With many a wild, indeed, but flowery spray,
 In hopes to gain, what else I must have lost,
 The attention pleasure has so much engrossed,
 But, if unhappily deceived, I dream,
 And prove too weak for so divine a theme,
 Let charity forgive me a mistake,
 That zeal, not vanity, has chanced to make,
 And spare the poet for his subject's sake.





CONVERSATION.

Nam neque me tantum venientis sibilus austri,
Nec percussa juvant fluctû tam litora, nec quæ
Saxosas inter decurrunt flumina valles.

VIRG., *Ecl.* v.

THOUGH nature weigh our talents, and dispense
To every man his modicum of sense,
And Conversation in its better part
May be esteemed a gift, and not an art,
Yet much depends, as in the tiller's toil,
On culture, and the sowing of the soil.
Words learned by rote a parrot may rehearse,
But talking is not always to converse;
Not more distinct from harmony divine,
The constant creaking of a country sign.
As alphabets in ivory employ,
Hour after hour, the yet unlettered boy,
Sorting and puzzling with a deal of glee
Those seeds of science called his A B C,
So language, in the mouth of the adult
(Witness its insignificant result),
Too often proves an implement of play,
A toy to sport with, and pass time away.
Collect at evening what the day brought forth,
Compress the sum into its solid worth,
And, if it weigh the importance of a fly,
The scales are false, or algebra a lie.
Sacred interpreter of human thought,
How few respect or use thee as they ought!
But all shall give account of every wrong,
Who dare dishonour or defile the tongue;

Who prostitute it in the cause of vice,
Or sell their glory at a market price ;
Who vote for hire, or point it with lampoon,
The dear-bought placeman, and the cheap buffoon.

There is a prurience in the speech of some—
Wrath stays him, or else God would strike them dumb :
His wise forbearance has their end in view,
They fill their measure, and receive their due.
The heathen lawgivers of ancient days,
Names almost worthy of a Christian's praise,
Would drive them forth from the resort of men,
And shut up every satyr in his den.
O come not ye near innocence and truth,
Ye worms that eat into the bud of youth !
Infectious as impure, your blighting power
Taints in its rudiments the promised flower ;
Its odour perished and its charming hue,
Thenceforth 'tis hateful, for it smells of you.
Not e'en the vigorous and headlong rage
Of adolescence, or a firmer age,
Affords a plea allowable or just
For making speech the pamperer of lust ;
But when the breath of age commits the fault,
'Tis nauseous as the vapour of a vault.
So withered stumps disgrace the sylvan scene,
No longer fruitful, and no longer green ;
The sapless wood, divested of the bark,
Grows fungous, and takes fire at every spark.

Oaths terminate, as Paul observes, all strife—
Some men have surely then a peaceful life !
Whatever subject occupy discourse—
The feats of Vestris, or the naval force—
Asseveration, blustering in your face,
Makes contradiction such a hopeless case ;
In every tale they tell, or false or true,
Well known, or such as no man ever knew,
They fix attention, heedless of your pain,
With oaths like rivets forced into the brain ;

And e'en when sober truth prevails throughout,
They swear it, till affirmance breeds a doubt,
A Persian, humble servant of the sun,
Who, though devout, yet bigotry had none,
Hearing a lawyer, grave in his address,
With adjurations every word impress,
Supposed the man a bishop, or at least,
God's name so much upon his lips, a priest;
Bowed at the close with all his graceful airs,
And begged an interest in his frequent prayers.

Go, quit the rank to which ye stood preferred,
Henceforth associate in one common herd;
Religion, virtue, reason, common sense,
Pronounce your human form a false pretence;
A mere disguise, in which a devil lurks,
Who yet betrays his secret by his works.

Ye powers who rule the tongue, if such there are,
And make colloquial happiness your care,
Preserve me from the thing I dread and hate—
A duel in the form of a debate.
The clash of arguments and jar of words,
Worse than the mortal brunt of rival swords,
Decide no question with their tedious length,
For opposition gives opinion strength;
Divert the champions prodigal of breath,
And put the peaceably disposed to death.
O thwart me not, Sir Soph, at every turn,
Nor carp at every flaw you may discern;
Though syllogisms hang not on my tongue,
I am not surely always in the wrong:
'Tis hard if all is false that I advance—
A fool must now and then be right by chance.
Not that all freedom of dissent I blame;
No—there I grant the privilege I claim.
A disputable point is no man's ground;
Rove where you please, 'tis common all around
Discourse may want an animated No,
To brush the surface, and to make it flow;

But still remember, if you mean to please,
To press your point with modesty and ease
The mark, at which my juster aim I take,
Is contradiction for its own dear sake.
Set your opinion at whatever pitch,
Knots and impediments make something hitch ;
Adopt his own, 'tis equally in vain,
Your thread of argument is snapped again ;
The wrangler, rather than accord with you,
Will judge himself deceived, and prove it too.
Vociferated logic kills me quite—
A noisy man is always in the right.



I twirl my thumbs, fall back into my chair,
Fix on the wainscot a distressful stare,
And, when I hope his blunders are all out,
Reply discreetly—To be sure—no doubt !
Dubius is such a scrupulous good man—
Yes—you may catch him tripping, if you can.

He would not, with a peremptory tone,
Assert the nose upon his face his own ;
With hesitation admirably slow,
He humbly hopes—presumes—it may be so.
His evidence, if he were called by law
To swear to some enormity he saw,
For want of prominence and just relief,
Would hang an honest man, and save a thief.
Through constant dread of giving truth offence,
He ties up all his hearers in suspense ;
Knows what he knows, as if he knew it not ;
What he remembers seems to have forgot ;
His sole opinion, whatso'er befall,
Centring at last in having none at all.
Yet, though he tease and balk your listening ear,
He makes one useful point exceeding clear.
Howe'er ingenious on his darling theme
A sceptic in philosophy may seem,
Reduced to practice, his beloved rule
Would only prove him a consummate fool :
Useless in him alike both brain and speech,
Fate having placed all truth above his reach,
His ambiguities his total sum,
He might as well be blind, and deaf, and dumb.

Where men of judgment creep and feel their way,
The positive pronounce without disaray ;
Their want of light and intellect supplied
By sparks absurdity strikes out of pride ;
Without the means of knowing wright from wrong,
They always are decisive, clear, and strong.
Where others toil with philosophic force,
Their nimble nonsense takes a shorter course ;
Flings at your head conviction in the lump,
And gains remote conclusions at a jump :
Their own defect, invisible to them,
Seen in another, they at once condemn ;
And, though self-idolized in every case,
Hate their own likeness in a brother's face.

The cause is plain, and not to be denied—
The proud are always most provoked by pride.
Few competitions but engendered spite;
And those the most where neither has a right.
The point of honour has been deemed of use,
To teach good manners, and to curb abuse!
Admit it true, the consequence is clear—
Our polished manners are a mask we wear,
And at the bottom barbarous still and rude;
We are restrained indeed, but not subdued.
The very remedy, however sure,
Springs from the mischief it intends to cure,
And savage in its principle appears,
Tried, as it should be, by the fruit it bears.
'Tis hard, indeed, if nothing will defend
Mankind from quarrels but their fatal end;
That now and then a hero must de cease,
That the surviving world may live in peace.
Perhaps at last close scrutiny may show
The practice dastardly, and mean, and low;
That men engage in it compelled by force;
And fear, not courage, is its proper source.
The fear of tyrant custom, and the fear
Lest fops should censure us, and fools should sneer.
At least to trample on our Maker's laws,
And hazard life for any or no cause,
To rush into a fixed eternal state
Out of the very flames of rage and hate,
Or send another shivering to the bar
With all the guilt of such unnatural war,
Whatever use may urge, or honour plead,
On reason's verdict is a madman's deed.
Am I to set my life upon a throw,
Because a bear is rude and surly? No;
A moral, sensible, and well-bred man
Will not affront me, and no other can.
Were I empowered to regulate the lists,
They should encounter with well-loaded fists;

A Trojan combat would be something new ;
Let Dares beat Entellus black and blue ;
Then each might show, to his admiring friends,
In honourable bumps his rich amends ;
And carry, in contusions of his skull,
A satisfactory receipt in full.

A story in which native humour reigns,
Is often useful, always entertains ;
A graver fact, enlisted on your side,
May furnish illustration, well applied ;
But sedentary weavers of long tales
Give me the fidgets, and my patience fails.
'Tis the most asinine employ on earth,
To hear them tell of parentage and birth,
And echo conversations, dull and dry,
Embellished with—He said, and so said I.
At every interview their route the same,
The repetition makes attention lame :
We bustle up with unsuccessful speed,
And, in the saddest part, cry—Droll indeed !
The path of narrative with care pursue,
Still making probability your clew ;
On all the vestiges of truth attend,
And let them guide you to a decent end.
Of all ambitions man may entertain,
The worst that can invade a sickly brain
Is that which angles hourly for surprise,
And baits its hook with prodigies and lies.
Credulous infancy, or age as weak,
Are fittest auditors for such to seek,
Who, to please others, will themselves disgrace,
Yet please not, but affront you to your face.
A great retailer of this curious ware,
Having unloaded and made many stare,
Can this be true ? an arch observer cries ;
Yes (rather moved), I saw it with these eyes !
Sir, I believe it on that ground alone ;
I could not, had I seen it with my own.

A tale should be judicious, clear, succinct ;
The language plain, and incidents well linked ;
Tell not as new what everybody knows,
And, new or old, still hasten to a close ;
There, centring in a focus round and neat,
Let all your rays of information meet.

What neither yields us profit nor delight,
Is like a nurse's lullaby at night ;
Guy, Earl of Warwick, and fair Eleanore,
Or giant-killing Jack, would please me more.

- The pipe, with solemn interposing puff,
Makes half a sentence at a time enough ;
The dozing sages drop the drowsy strain,
Then pause and puff—and speak and pause again.
Such often, like the tube they so admire,
Important triflers ! have more smoke than fire.
Pernicious weed ! whose scent the fair annoys,
Unfriendly to society's chief joys,
Thy worst effect is banishing for hours
The sex whose presence civilizes ours ;
Thou art indeed the drug a gardener wants,
To poison vermin that infest his plants ;
But are we so to wit and beauty blind,
As to despise the glory of our kind,
And show the softest minds and fairest forms
As little mercy as the grubs and worms ?
They dare not wait the riotous abuse
Thy thirst-creating streams at length produce,
When wine has given indecent language birth,
And forced the floodgates of licentious mirth ;
For sea-born Venus her attachment shows
Still to that element from which she rose,
And with a quiet, which no fumes disturb,
Sips meek infusions of a milder herb.

The emphatic speaker dearly loves to oppose,
In contact inconvenient, nose to nose,
As if the gnomon on his neighbour's phiz,
Touched with the magnet, had attracted his.

His whispered theme, dilated and at large,
Proves, after all, a wind-gun's airy charge;
An extract of his diary—no more—
A tasteless journal of the day before.
He walked abroad, o'ertaken in the rain,
Called on a friend, drank tea, stepped home again.
Resumed his purpose, had a world of talk
With one he stumbled on, and lost his walk.
I interrupt him with a sudden bow,
Adieu, dear sir, lest you should lose it now.

I cannot talk with Civet in the room,
A fine puss gentleman that's all perfume;
The sight's enough—no need to smell a beau—
Who thrusts his nose into a raree-show!
His odoriferous attempts to please
Perhaps might prosper with a swarm of bees;
But we that make no honey, though we sting,
Poets, are sometimes apt to maul the thing.
'Tis wrong to bring into a mixed resort,
What makes some sick, and others à-la-mort—
An argument of cogence, we may say,
Why such a one should keep himself away.

A graver coxcomb we may sometimes see,
Quite as absurd, though not so light as he:
A shallow brain behind a serious mask,
An oracle within an empty cask,
The solemn fop; significant and budge;
A fool with judges, amongst fools a judge.
He says but little, and that little said
Owes all its weight, like loaded dice, to lead.
His wit invites you by his looks to come,
But when you knock it never is at home:
'Tis like a parcel sent you by the stage,
Some handsome present, as your hopes presage;
'Tis heavy, bulky, and bids fair to prove
An absent friend's fidelity and love;
But, when unpacked, your disappointment groans
To find it stuffed with brickbats, earth, and stones.

Some men employ their health—an ugly trick—
In making known how oft they have been sick,
And give us, in recitals of disease,
A doctor's trouble, but without the fees;
Relate how many weeks they kept their bed,
How an emetic or cathartic sped;
Nothing is slightly touched, much less forgot,
Nose, ears, and eyes seem present on the spot.
Now the distemper, spite of draught or pill,
Victorious seemed, and now the doctor's skill;
And now—alas, for unforeseen mishaps!—
They put on a damp nightcap, and relapse;
They thought they must have died, they were so bad;
Their peevish hearers almost wish they had.

Some fretful tempers wince at every touch—
You always do too little or too much:
You speak with life, in hopes to entertain,
Your elevated voice goes through the brain;
You fall at once into a lower key,
That's worse—the drone-pipe of an humble bee.
The southern sash admits too strong a light,
You rise and drop the curtain—now 'tis night.
He shakes with cold—you stir the fire, and strive
To make a blaze—that's roasting him alive.
Serve him with venison, and he chooses fish;
With sole—that's just the sort he would not wish.
He takes what he at first professed to loathe,
And in due time feeds heartily on both;
Yet still, o'erclouded with a constant frown,
He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.
Your hope to please him vain on every plan,
Himself should work that wonder if he can.
Alas! his efforts double his distress,
He likes yours little, and his own still less.
Thus, always teasing others, always teased,
His only pleasure is to be displeased.

I pity bashful men, who feel the pain
Of fancied scorn and undeserved disdain,

And bear the marks upon a blushing face
Of needless shame and self-imposed disgrace.
Our sensibilities are so acute,
The fear of being silent makes us mute.
We sometimes think we could a speech produce
Much to the purpose, if our tongues were loose ;
But, being tried, it dies upon the lip,
Faint as a chicken's note that has the pip :
Our wasted oil unprofitably burns,
Like hidden lamps in old sepulchral urns.
Few Frenchmen of this evil have complained ;
It seems as if we Britons were ordained,
By way of wholesome curb upon our pride,
To fear each other, fearing none beside.
The cause, perhaps inquiry may descry,
Self searching with an introverted eye,
Concealed within an unsuspected part,
The vainest corner of our own vain heart ;
For ever aiming at the world's esteem,
Our self-importance ruins its own scheme ;
In other eyes, our talents rarely shown,
Become at length so splendid in our own,
We dare not risk them into public view,
Lest they miscarry of what seems their due.
True modesty is a discerning grace,
And only blushes in the proper place ;
But counterfeit is blind, and skulks through fear,
Where 'tis a shame to be ashamed to appear :
Humility, the parent of the first,
The last by vanity produced and nursed.
The circle formed, we sit in silent state,
Like figures drawn upon a dial-plate ;
Yes, ma'am, and No, ma'am, uttered softly, show
Every five minutes how the minutes go ;
Each individual, suffering a constraint,
Poetry may, but colours cannot paint ;
As if in close committee on the sky,
Reports it hot or cold, or wet or dry ;

And finds a changing clime a happy source
 Of wise reflection and well-timed discourse.
 We next inquire, but softly and by stealth,
 Like conservators of the public health,
 Of epidemic throats, if such there are,
 And coughs, and rheums, and phthisic and catarrh.
 That theme exhausted, a wide chasm ensues,
 Filled up at last with interesting news—
 Who danced with whom, and who are like to wed,
 And who is hanged, and who is brought to bed :
 But fear to call a more important cause,
 As if 'twere treason against English laws.
 The visit paid, with ecstasy we come,
 As from a seven years' transportation, home,
 And there resume an unembarrassed brow,
 Recovering what we lost we know not how—
 The faculties, that seemed reduced to nought,
 Expression, and the privilege of thought.

The reeking, roaring hero of the chase,
 I give him over as a desperate case.
 Physicians write in hopes to work a cure,
 Never, if honest ones, when death is sure :
 And though the fox he follows may be tamed,
 A mere fox follower never is reclaimed.
 Some farrier should prescribe his proper course,
 Whose only fit companion is his horse,
 Or if, deserving of a better doom,
 The noble beast judge otherwise, his groom.
 Yet e'en the rogue that serves him, though he stand
 To take his honour's orders, cap in hand,
 Prefers his fellow grooms with much good sense,
 Their skill a truth, his master's a pretence.
 If neither horse nor groom affect the squire,
 Where can at last his jockeyship retire ?
 O, to the club, the scene of savage joys,
 The school of coarse good fellowship and noise ;
 There, in the sweet society of those
 Whose friendship from his boyish years he chose,

Let him improve his talent if he can,
Till none but beasts acknowledge him a man.

Man's heart had been impenetrably sealed,
Like theirs that cleave the flood or graze the field,
Had not his Maker's all-bestowing hand
Given him a soul, and bade him understand ;
The reasoning power vouchsafed, of course inferred
The power to clothe that reason with his word ;
For all is perfect that God works on earth,
And he that gives conception aids the birth.
If this be plain, 'tis plainly understood,
What uses of this boon the Giver would.
The mind, despatched upon her busy toil,
Should range where Providence has blessed the soil ;
Visiting every flower with labour meet,
And gathering all her treasures sweet by sweet,
She should imbue the tongue with what she sips,
And shed the balmy blessing on the lips,
That good diffused may more abundant grow,
And speech may praise the power that bids it flow.
Will the sweet warbler of the livelong night,
That fills the listening lover with delight,
Forget his harmony, with rapture heard,
To learn the twittering of a meaner bird ?
Or make the parrot's mimicry his choice,
That odious libel on a human voice ?
No—nature, unsophisticate by man,
Starts not aside from her Creator's plan ;
The melody that was at first designed
To cheer the rude forefathers of mankind,
Is note for note delivered in our ears,
In the last scene of her six thousand years.
Yet fashion, leader of a chattering train,
Whom man, for his own hurt, permits to reign,
Who shifts and changes all things but his shape,
And would degrade her votary to an ape,
The fruitful parent of abuse and wrong,
Holds a usurped dominion o'er his tongue :

There sits and prompts him with his own disgrace,
Prescribes the theme, the tone, and the grimace;
And, when accomplished in her wayward school,
Calls gentlemen, whom she has made a fool.
'Tis an unalterable fixed decree,
That none could frame or ratify but she,
That heaven and hell, and righteousness and sin,
Snares in his path, and foes that lurk within,
God and his attributes (a field of day
Where 'tis an angel's happiness to stray),
Fruits of his love and wonders of his might,
Be never named in ears esteemed polite.
That he who dares, when she forbids, be grave,
Shall stand proscribed, a madman or a knave,
A close designer, not to be believed,
Or, if excused that charge, at least deceived.
Oh, folly worthy of the nurse's lap,
Give it the breast, or stop its mouth with pap!
Is it incredible—or can it seem
A dream to any, except those that dream—
That man should love his Maker, and that fire,
Warming his heart, should at his lips transpire?
Know then, and modestly let fall your eyes,
And veil your daring crest that braves the skies;
That air of insolence affronts your God,
You need his pardon, and provoke his rod:
Now, in a posture that becomes you more
Than that heroic strut assumed before,
Know your arrears with every hour accrue,
For mercy shown, while wrath is justly due.
The time is short, and there are souls on earth,
Though future pain may serve for present mirth,
Acquainted with the woes that fear or shame,
By fashion taught, forbade them once to name,
And, having felt the pangs you deem a jest,
Have proved them truths too big to be expressed.
Go seek on revelation's hallowed ground,
Sure to succeed, the remedy they found;

Touched by that power that you have dared to mock,
That makes seas stable, and dissolves the rock,
Your heart shall yield a life-renewing stream,
That fools, as you have done, shall call a dream.

It happened on a solemn eventide,
Soon after He that was our surety died,
Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,
The scene of all those sorrows left behind,
Sought their own village, busied as they went
In musings worthy of the great event :
They spake of him they loved, of him whose life,
Though blameless, had incurred perpetual strife,
Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,
A deep memorial graven on their hearts.
The recollection, like a vein of ore,
The farther traced, enriched them still the more ;
They thought him, and they justly thought him, one
Sent to do more than he appeared to have done—
To exalt a people, and to place them high
Above all else—and wondered he should die.
Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,
A stranger joined them, courteous as a friend,
And asked them, with a kind engaging air,
What their affliction was, and begged a share.
Informed, he gathered up the broken thread,
And, truth and wisdom gracing all he said,
Explained, illustrated, and searched so well
The tender theme on which they chose to dwell,
That, reaching home, the night, they said, is near,
We must not now be parted—sojourn here ;
The new acquaintance soon became a guest,
And, made so welcome at their simple feast,
He blessed the bread, but vanished at the word,
And left them both exclaiming, 'Twas the Lord :
Did not our hearts feel all he deigned to say,
Did they not burn within us by the way ?

Now theirs was converse such as it behoves
Man to maintain, and such as God approves ;



Their views, indeed, were indistinct and dim,
 But yet successful, being aimed at him.
 Christ and his character their only scope,
 Their object, and their subject, and their hope,
 They felt what it became them much to feel,
 And, wanting him to loose the sacred seal,
 Found him as prompt as their desire was true,
 To spread the new-born glories in their view.
 Well—what are ages and the lapse of time
 Matched against truths as lasting as sublime?

Can length of years on God himself exact ?
Or make that fiction which was once a fact ?
No; marble and recording brass decay,
And, like the graver's memory, pass away ;
The works of man inherit, as is just,
Their author's frailty, and return to dust ;
But truth divine for ever stands secure,
Its head is guarded as its base is sure ;
Fixed in the rolling flood of endless years,
The pillar of the eternal plan appears ;
The raving storm and dashing wave deter,
Built by that architect who built the skies.
Hearts may be found, that harbour at this hour
That love of Christ, and all its quickening power ;
And lips unstained by folly or by strife,
Whose wisdom, drawn from the deep well of life,
Tastes of its healthful origin, and flows
A Jordan for the ablution of our woes.
Oh days of heaven, and nights of equal praise,
Serene and peaceful as those heavenly days,
When souls, drawn upwards in communion sweet,
Enjoy the stillness of some close retreat,
Discourse, as if released and safe at home,
Of dangers past, and wonders yet to come,
And spread the sacred treasures of the breast,
Upon the lap of covenanted Rest !
What ! always dreaming over heavenly things,
Like angel heads in stone with pigeon wings ?
Canting and whining out all day the word,
And half the night ? Fanatic and absurd !
Mine be the friend less frequent in his prayers,
Who makes no bustle with his soul's affairs,
Whose wit can brighten up a wintry day,
And chase the splenetic dull hours away ;
Content on earth in earthly things to shine,
Who waits for heaven ere he becomes divine ;
Leaves saints to enjoy those altitudes they teach,
And plucks the fruit placed more within his reach.

Well spoken, advocato of sin and shame,
Known by thy bleating, Ignorance thy name.
Is sparkling wit the world's exclusive right?
The fixed fee-simple of the vain and light?
Can hopes of heaven, bright prospects of an hour,
That come to waft us out of sorrow's power,
Obscure or quench a faculty that finds
Its happiest soil in the serenest minds?
Religion curbs, indeed, its wanton play,
And brings the trifler under rigorous sway,
But gives it usefulness unknown before,
And, purifying, makes it shine the more.
A Christian's wit is inoffensive light,
A beam that aids, but never grieves the sight;
Vigorous in age, as in the flush of youth,
'Tis always active on the side of truth;
Temperance and peace insure its healthful state,
And make it brightest at its latest date.
Oh, I have seen (nor hope perhaps in vain,
Ere life go down, to see such sights again)
A veteran warrior in the Christian field,
Who never saw the sword he could not wield;
Grave without dulness, learned without pride,
Exact, yet not precise—though meek, keen-eyed;
A man that would have foiled at their own play
A dozen would-be's of the modern day;
Who, when occasion justified its use,
Had wit as bright as ready to produce;
Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
Or from philosophy's enlightened page,
His rich materials, and regale your ear
With strains it was a privilege to hear:
Yet, above all, his luxury supreme,
And his chief glory, was the gospel theme;
There he was copious as old Greece or Rome,
His happy eloquence seemed there at home;
Ambitious not to shine or to excel,
But to treat justly what he loved so well.

It moves me more perhaps than folly ought,
When some green heads, as void of wit as thought,
Suppose themselves monopolists of sense,
And wiser men's ability pretence.
Though time will wear us, and we must grow old,
Such men are not forgot as soon as cold,
Their fragrant memory will outlast their tomb,
Embalmed for ever in its own perfume.
And to say truth, though in its early prime,
And when unstained with any grosser crime,
Youth has a sprightliness and fire to boast,
That in the valley of decline are lost,
And virtue with peculiar charms appears,
Crowned with the garland of life's blooming years ;
Yet age, by long experience well informed,
Well read, well tempered, with religion warmed,
That fire abated which impels rash youth,
Proud of his speed, to overshoot the truth,
As time improves the grape's authentic juice,
Mellows and makes the speech more fit for use,
And claims a reverence in its shortening day,
That 'tis an honour and a joy to pay.
The fruits of age, less fair, are yet more sound
Than those a brighter season pours around ;
And, like the stores autumnal suns mature,
Through wintry rigours unimpaired endure.
What is fanatic frenzy, scorned so much,
And dreaded more than a contagious touch ?
I grant it dangerous, and approve your fear,
That fire is catching if you draw too near ;
But sage observers oft mistake the flame,
And give true piety that odious name.
To tremble (as the creature of an hour
Ought at the view of an Almighty power)
Before His presence, at whose awful throne
All tremble in all worlds except our own,
To supplicate his mercy, love his ways,
And prize them above pleasure, wealth, or praise,

Though common sense, allowed a casting voice,
And free from bias, must approve the choice,
Convicts a man fanatic in the extreme,
And wild as madness in the world's esteem.
But that disease, when soberly defined,
Is the false fire of an o'erheated mind :
It views the truth with a distorted eye,
And either warps or lays it useless by ;
'Tis narrow, selfish, arrogant, and draws
Its sordid nourishment from man's applause ;
And while at heart sin unrelinquished lies,
Presumes itself chief favourite of the skies.
'Tis such a light as putrefaction breeds
In fly-blown flesh, whereon the maggot feeds.
Shines in the dark, but, ushered into day,
The stench remains, the lustre dies away.

True bliss, if man may reach it, is composed
Of hearts in union mutually disclosed ;
And farewell else all hope of pure delight,
Those hearts should be reclaimed, renewed, upright
Bad men, profaning friendship's hallowed name,
Form, in its stead, a covenant of shame,
A dark confederacy against the laws
Of virtue, and religion's glorious cause :
They build each other up with dreadful skill,
As bastions set point blank against God's will ;
Enlarge and fortify the dread redoubt,
Deeply resolved to shut a Saviour out ;
Call legions up from hell to back the deed ;
And, cursed with conquest, finally succeed.
But souls, that carry on a blest exchange
Of joys they meet with in their heavenly range,
And, with a fearless confidence, make known
The sorrows sympathy esteems its own,
Daily derive increasing light and force
From such communion in their pleasant course,
Feel less the journey's roughness and its length,
Meet their opposers with united strength ;

And one in heart, in interest, and design,
Gird up each other to the race divine.
But Conversation, choose what theme we may,
And chiefly when religion leads the way,
Should flow, like waters after summer showers,
Not as if raised by mere mechanic powers.
The Christian, in whose soul, though now distressed,
Lives the dear thought of joys he once possessed,
When all his glowing language issued forth
With God's deep stamp upon its current worth,
Will speak without disguise, and must impart,
Sad as it is, his undissembling heart;
Abhors constraint, and dares not feign a zeal,
Or seem to boast a fire he does not feel.
The song of Sion is a tasteless thing,
Unless, when rising on a joyful wing,
The soul can mix with the celestial bands,
And give the strain the compass it demands.
Strange tidings these to tell a world, who treat
All but their own experience as deceit;
Will they believe, though credulous enough
To swallow much upon much weaker proof,
That there are blest inhabitants of earth
Partakers of a new ethereal birth;
Their hopes, desires, and purposes estranged
From things terrestrial, and divinely changed;
Their very language of a kind that speaks
The soul's sure interest in the good she seeks;
Who deal with Scripture, its importance felt,
As Tully with philosophy once dealt,
And in the silent watches of the night,
And through the scenes of toil-renewing light,
The social walk, or solitary ride,
Keep still the dear companion at their side?
No—shame upon a self-disgracing age,
God's work may serve an ape upon a stage
With such a jest, as filled with hellish glee
Certain invisibles as shrewd as he;

But veneration or respect finds none,
Save from the subjects of that work alone.
The world, grown old, her deep discernment shows,
Claps spectacles on her sagacious nose,
Peruses closely the true Christian's face,
And finds it a mere mask of sly grimace ;
Usurps God's office, lays his bosom bare,
And finds hypocrisy close lurking there ;
And, serving God herself through mere constraint,
Concludes his unfeigned love of him a feint.
And yet, God knows, look human nature through
(And in due time the world shall know it too),
That, since the flowers of Eden felt the blast
That after man's defection laid all waste,
Sincerity towards the heart-searching God
Has made the new-born creature her abode ;
Nor shall be found in unregenerate souls,
Till the last fire burn all between the poles.
Sincerity ! why, 'tis his only pride,
Weak and imperfect in all grace beside ;
He knows that God demands his heart entire,
And gives him all his just demands require.
Without it, his pretensions were as vain
As, having it, he deems the world's disdain ;
That great defect would cost him not alone
Man's favourable judgment, but his own ;
His birthright shaken, and no longer clear,
Than while his conduct proves his heart sincere.
Retort the charge, and let the world be told
She boasts a confidence she does not hold ;
That, conscious of her crimes, she feels instead
A cold misgiving, and a killing dread :
That while in health the ground of her support
Is madly to forget that life is short ;
That sick, she trembles, knowing she must die,
Her hope presumption, and her faith a lie ;
That while she dotes, and dreams that she believes,
She mocks her Maker, and herself deceives,

Her utmost reach historical assent,
The doctrines warped to what they never meant;
That truth itself is in her head as dull
And useless as a candle in a skull,
And all her love of God a groundless claim,
A trick upon the canvass, painted flame.
Tell her again, the sneer upon her face,
And all her censures of the work of grace,
Are insincere, meant only to conceal
A dread she would not, yet is forced to feel;
That in her heart the Christian she reveres,
And while she seems to scorn him, only fears.

A poet does not work by square or line,
As smiths and joiners perfect a design;
At least we moderns, our attention less,
Beyond the example of our sires digress,
And claim a right to scamper and run wide,
Wherever chance, caprice, or fancy guide.
The world and I fortuitously met;
I owed a trifle, and have paid the debt:
She did me wrong, I recompensed the deed,
And, having struck the balance, now proceed.
Perhaps, however, as some years have passed
Since she and I conversed together last,
And I have lived recluse in rural shades,
Which seldom a distinct report pervades,
Great changes and new manners have occurred,
And blest reforms, that I have never heard,
And she may now be as discreet and wise,
As once absurd, in all discerning eyes.
Sobriety perhaps may now be found
Where once intoxication pressed the ground;
The subtle and injurious may be just,
And he grown chaste that was the slave of lust;
Arts once esteemed may be with shame dismissed;
Charity may relax the miser's fist;
The gamester may have cast his cards away,
Forgot to curse, and only kneel to pray.

'It has indeed been told me (with what weight,
 How credibly, 'tis hard for me to state),
 That fables old, that seemed for ever mute,
 Revived, are hastening into fresh repute,
 And gods and goddesses discarded long
 Like useless lumber, or a stroller's song,
 Are bringing into vogue their heathen train,
 And Jupiter bids fair to rule again ;
 That certain feasts are instituted now,
 Where Venus hears the lover's tender vow ;
 That all Olympus through the country roves,
 To consecrate our few remaining groves,
 And Echo learns politely to repeat
 The praise of names for ages obsolete ;
 That having proved the weakness, it should seem,
 Of revelation's ineffectual beam,
 To bring the passions under sober sway,
 And give the moral springs their proper play,
 They mean to try what may at last be done
 By stout substantial gods of wood and stone,
 And whether Roman rites may not produce
 The virtues of old Rome for English use.
 May such success attend the pious plan,
 May Mercury once more embellish man,
 Grace him again with long-forgotten arts,
 Reclaim his taste, and brighten up his parts,
 Make him athletic as in days of old,
 Learned at the bar, in the palæstra bold,
 Divest the rougher sex of female airs,
 And teach the softer not to copy theirs :
 The change shall p'ease, nor shall it matter aught.
 Who works the wonder, if it be but wrought.
 'Tis time, however, if the case stands thus,
 For us plain folks, and all who side with us,
 To build our altar, confident and bold,
 And say, as stern Elijah said of old,
 The strife now stands upon a fair award :
 If Israel's Lord be God, then serve the Lord ;

If he be silent, faith is all a whim,
Then Baal is the God, and worship him.

Digression is so much in modern use,
Thought is so rare, and fancy so profuse,
Some never seem so wide of their intent
As when returning to the theme they meant ;
As mendicants, whose business is to roam,
Make every parish but their own their home.
Though such continual zigzags in a book,
Such drunken reelings, have an awkward look,
And I had rather creep to what is true,
Than rove and stagger with no mark in view ;
Yet to consult a little seemed no crime,
The freakish humour of the present time :
But now to gather up what seems dispersed,
And touch the subject I designed at first,
May prove, though much beside the rules of art,
Best for the public, and my wisest part.
And first, let no man charge me, that I mean
To close in sable every social scene,
And give good company a face severe,
As if they met around a father's bier ;
For tell some men, that pleasure all their bent,
And laughter all their work, is life misspent,
Their wisdom bursts into this sage reply,
Then mirth is sin, and we should always cry.
To find the medium asks some share of wit,
And therefore 'tis a mark fools never hit.
But though life's valley be a vale of tears,
A brighter scene beyond that vale appears,
Whose glory, with a light that never fades,
Shoots between scattered rocks and opening shades ;
And while it shows the land the soul desires,
The language of the land she seeks inspires.
Thus touched, the tongue receives a sacred cure
Of all that was absurd, profane, impure ;
Held within modest bounds, the tide of speech
Pursues the course that truth and nature teach ;

No longer labours merely to produce
The pomp of sound, or tinkle without use ;
Where'er it winds, the salutary stream,
Sprightly and fresh, enriches every theme,
While all the happy man possessed before,
The gift of nature, or the classic store,
Is made subservient to the grand design
For which Heaven formed the faculty divine.
So, should an idiot, while at large he strays,
Find the sweet lyre on which an artist plays,
With rash and awkward force, the chords he shakes,
And grins with wonder at the jar he makes ;
But let the wise and well-instructed hand
Once take the shell beneath his just command,
In gentle sounds it seems as it complained
Of the rude injuries it late sustained,
Till, tuned at length to some immortal song,
It sounds Jehovah's name, and pours his praise along.





RETIREMENT.

. . . *Studilis florens ignobilis otti.*
VIRG , Gcor. Lib iv

HACKNEYED in business, wearied at that oar,
Which thousands, once fast chained to, quit no more,
But which, when life at ebb runs weak and low,
All wish, or seem to wish, they could forego ;
The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,
Pants for the refuge of some rural shade,
Where, all his long anxieties forgot
Amid the charms of a sequestered spot,
Or recollected only to gild o'er,
And add a smile to what was sweet before,
He may possess the joys he thinks he sees,
Lay his old age upon the lap of ease,
Improve the remnant of his wasted span,
And, having lived a trifler, die a man.
Thus conscience pleads her cause within the breast,
Though long rebelled against, not yet suppressed,
And calls a creature formed for God alone,
For Heaven's high purposes, and not his own—
Calls him away from selfish ends and aims,
From what debilitates and what inflames,
From cities humming with a restless crowd,
Sordid as active, ignorant as loud ;
Whose highest praise is that they live in vain,
The dupes of pleasure, or the slaves of gain,
Where works of man are clustered close around,
And works of God are hardly to be found,

To regions where, in spite of sin and woe,
Traces of Eden are still seen below,
Where mountain, river, forest, field, and grove,
Remind him of his Maker's power and love.



'Tis well, if looked for at so late a day,
In the last scene of such a senseless play,
True wisdom will attend his feeble call,
And grace his action ere the curtain fall.

Souls, that have long despised their heavenly birth,
Their wishes all impregnated with earth,
For threescore years employed with ceaseless care
In catching smoke and feeding upon air,
Conversant only with the ways of men,
Rarely redeem the short remaining ten.
Inveterate habits choke the unfruitful heart,
Their fibres penetrate its tenderest part,
And, draining its nutritious powers to feed
Their noxious growth, starve every better seed.

Happy, if full of days—but happier far,
If, ere we yet discern life's evening star,
Sick of the service of a world that feeds
Its patient drudges with dry chaff and weeds,
We can escape from custom's idiot sway,
To serve the Sovereign we were born to obey.
Then sweet to muse upon his skill displayed
(Infinite skill) in all that he has made !
To trace, in nature's most minute design,
The signature and stamp of power divine,
Contrivance intricate, expressed with ease
Where unassisted sight no beauty sees,
The shapely limb and lubricated joint,
Within the small dimensions of a point,
Muscle and nerve miraculously spun,
His mighty work, who speaks and it is done,
The invisible in things scarce seen revealed,
To whom an atom is an ample field ;
To wonder at a thousand insect forms,
These hatched, and those resuscitated worms,
New life ordained and brighter scenes to share,
Once prone on earth, now buoyant upon air,
Whose shape would make them, had they bulk and size,
More hideous foes than fancy can devise ;
With helmet-heads, and dragon-scales adorned,
The mighty myriads, now securely scorned,
Would mock the majesty of man's high birth,
Despise his bulwarks, and unpeople earth :

Then with a glance of fancy to survey,
 Far as the faculty can stretch away,
 Ten thousand rivers poured at his command,
 From urns that never fail, through every land ;
 These like a deluge with impetuous force,
 Those winding modestly a silent course ;
 The cloud-surmounting Alps, the fruitful vales ;
 Seas, on which every nation spreads her sails ;
 The sun, a world whence other worlds drink light,
 The crescent moon, the diadem of night ;
 Stars countless, each in his appointed place,
 Fast anchored in the deep abyss of space—
 At such a sight, to catch the poet's flame,
 And, with a rapture like his own, exclaim,
 These are thy glorious works, thou Source of good,
 How dimly seen, how faintly understood !
 Thine, and upheld by thy paternal care,
 This universal frame, thus wondrous fair ;
 Thy power divine and bounty beyond thought,
 Adored and praised in all that thou hast wrought.
 Absorbed in that immensity I see,
 I shrink abased, and yet aspire to thee ;
 Instruct me, guide me to that heavenly day,
 Thy words, more clearly than thy works, display,
 That, while thy truths my grosser thoughts refine,
 I may resemble thee, and call thee mine.
 O blest proficiency ! surpassing all
 That men erroneously their glory call,
 The recompense that arts or arms can yield,
 The bar, the senate, or the tented field.
 Compared with this sublimest life below,
 Ye kings and rulers, what have courts to show ?
 Thus studied, used and consecrated thus,
 On earth what is, seems formed indeed for us ;
 Not as the plaything of a froward child,
 Fretful unless diverted and beguiled,
 Much less to feed and fan the fatal fires
 Of pride, ambition, or impure desires ;

But as a scale, by which the soul ascends,
From mighty means to more important ends,
Securely, though by steps but rarely trod, —
Mounts from inferior beings up to God,
And sees, by no fallacious light or dim,
Earth made for man, and man himself for Him.

Not that I mean to approve, or would enforce
A superstitious and monastic course :
Truth is not local ; God alike pervades
And fills the world of traffic and the shades,
And may be feared amid the busiest scenes,
Or scorned where business never intervenes.
But 'tis not easy with a mind like ours,
Conscious of weakness in its noblest powers,
And in a world where, other ills apart,
The roving eye misleads the careless heart,
To limit thought, by nature prone to stray
Wherever freakish fancy points the way ;
To bid the pleadings of self-love be still,
Resign our own, and seek our Maker's will ;
To read the page of Scripture, and compare
Our conduct with the laws engraven there ;
To measure all that passes in the breast,
Faithfully, fairly, by that sacred test ;
To dive into the secret deeps within,
To spare no passion and no favourite sin ;
And search the themes, important above all,
Ourselves, and our recovery from our fall.
But leisure, silence, and a mind released
From anxious thoughts how wealth may be increased,
How to secure, in some propitious hour,
The point of interest, or the post of power ;
A soul serene, and equally retired
From objects too much dreaded or desired,
Safe from the clamours of perverse dispute,
At least are friendly to the great pursuit.
Opening the map of God's extensive plan,
We find a little isle, this life of man ;

Eternity's unknown expanse appears,
Circling around and limiting his years.
The busy race examine and explore
Each creek and cavern of the dangerous shore,
With care collect what in their eyes excels,
Some shining pebbles, and some weeds and shells ;
Thus laden, dream that they are rich and great.
And happiest he that groans beneath his weight.
The waves o'ertake them in their serious play,
And every hour sweeps multitudes away ;
They shriek and sink, survivors start and weep,
Pursue their sport, and follow to the deep.
A few forsake the throng ; with lifted eyes,
Ask wealth of Heaven, and gain a real prize—
Truth, wisdom, grace, and peace like that above,
Sealed with his signet, whom they serve and love ;
Scorned by the rest, with patient hope they wait
A kind release from their imperfect state,
And, unregretted, are soon snatched away
From scenes of sorrow into glorious day.

Nor these alone prefer a life recluse,
Who seek retirement for its proper use ;
The love of change, that lives in every breast,
Genius and temper, and desire of rest,
Discordant motives in one centre meet,
And each inclines its votary to retreat.
Some minds, by nature, are averse to noise,
And hate the tumult half the world enjoys,
The lure of avarice, or the pompous prize
That courts display before ambitious eyes ;
The fruits that hang on pleasure's flowery stem,
Whate'er enchants them, are no snares to them.
To them the deep recess of dusky groves,
Or forest, where the deer securely roves,
The fall of waters, and the song of birds,
And hills that echo to the distant herds,
Are luxuries excelling all the glare
The world can boast, and her chief favourites share.

With eager step, and carelessly arrayed,
For such a cause, the poet seeks the shade ;
From all he sees he catches new delight,
Pleased fancy claps her pinions at the sight,
The rising or the setting orb of day,
The clouds that flit or slowly float away,
Nature in all the various shapes she wears,
Frowning in storms, or breathing gentle airs,
The snowy robe her wintry state assumes,
Her summer heats, her fruits, and her perfumes—
All, all alike transport the glowing bard,
Success in rhyme his glory and reward.
O nature ! whose Elysian scenes disclose
His bright perfections at whose word they rose,
Next to that Power who formed thee and sustains,
Be thou the great inspirer of my strains.
Still, as I touch the lyre, do thou expand
Thy genuine charms, and guide an artless hand,
That I may catch a fire but rarely known,
Give useful light, though I should miss renown,
And, poring on thy page, whose every line
Bears proof of an intelligence divine,
May feel a heart enriched by what it pays,
That builds its glory on its Maker's praise.
Woe to the man whose wit disclaims its use,
Glittering in vain, or only to seduce,
Who studies nature with a wanton eye,
Admires the work, but slips the lesson by ;
His hours of leisure and recess employs
In drawing pictures of forbidden joys ;
Retires to blazon his own worthless name,
Or shoot the careless with a surer aim.

The lover too shuns business and alarms,
Tender idolater of absent charms.
Saints offer nothing in their warmest prayers
That he devotes not with a zeal like theirs ;
'Tis consecration of his heart, soul, time,
And every thought that wanders is a crime.

In sighs he worships his supremely fair,
And weeps a sad libation in despair ;
Adores a creature, and, devout in vain,
Wins in return an answer of disdain.
As woodbine weds the plant within her reach,
Rough elm, or smooth-grained ash, or glossy beech,
In spiral rings ascends the trunk, and lays
Her golden tassels on the leafy sprays,
But does a mischief while she lends a grace,
Straitening its growth by such a strict embrace ;
So love, that clings around the noblest minds,
Forbids the advancement of the soul he binds ;
The suitor's air, indeed, he soon improves,
And forms it to the taste of her he loves,
Teaches his eyes a language, and no less
Refines his speech, and fashions his address ;
But farewell promises of happier fruits,
Manly designs, and learning's grave pursuits ;
Girt with a chain he cannot wish to break,
His only bliss is sorrow for her sake ;
Who will may pant for glory and excel,
Her smile his aim, all higher aims farewell !
Thyrsis, Alexis, or whatever name
May least offend against so pure a flame,
Though sage advice of friends the most sincere
Sounds harshly in so delicate an ear,
And lovers, of all creatures, tame or wild,
Can least brook management, however mild,
Yet let a poet (poetry disarms
The fiercest animals with magic charms)
Risk an intrusion on thy pensive mood,
And woo and win thee to thy proper good.
Pastoral images and still retreats,
Umbrageous walks and solitary seats,
Sweet birds in concert with harmonious streams,
Soft airs, nocturnal vigils, and gay dreams,
Are all enchantments in a case like thine,
Conspire against thy peace with one design,

Soothe thee to make thee but a surer prey,
And feed the fire that wastes thy powers away.
Up—God has formed thee with a wiser view,
Not to be led in chains, but to subdue;
Calls thee to cope with enemies, and first
Points out a conflict with thyself, the worst.
Woman, indeed, a gift he would bestow
When he designed a Paradise below,
The richest earthly boon his hands afford,
Deserves to be beloved, but not adored;
Post away swiftly to more active scenes,
Collect the scattered truths that study gleans;
Mix with the world, but with its wiser part,
No longer give an image all thine heart;
Its empire is not hers, nor is it thine,
'Tis God's just claim, prerogative divine.

Virtuous and faithful Heberden, whose skill
Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil,
Gives melancholy up to nature's care,
And sends the patient into purer air.
Look where he comes—in this embowered alcove
Stand close concealed, and see a statue move:
Lips busy, and eyes fixed, foot falling slow,
Arms hanging idly down, hands clasped below,
Interpret to the marking eye distress,
Such as its symptoms can alone express.
That tongue is silent now; that silent tongue
Could argue once, could jest, or join the song,
Could give advice, could censure, or commend,
Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend.
Renounced alike its office and its sport,
Its brisker and its graver strains fall short;
Both fail beneath a fever's secret sway,
And, like a summer brook, are passed away:
This is a sight for pity to peruse,
Till she resemble faintly what she views,
Till sympathy contract a kindred pain,
Pierced with the woes that she laments in vain.

This, of all maladies that man infest,
Claims most compassion, and receives the least;
Job felt it, when he groaned beneath the rod
And the barbed arrows of a frowning God;
And such emollients as his friends could spare,
Friends such as his, for modern Jobs prepare.
Blest, rather curst, with hearts that never feel,
Kept snug in caskets of close-hammered steel,
With mouths made only to grin wide and eat,
And minds that deem derided pain a treat,
With limbs of British oak, and nerves of wire,
And wit that puppet prompters might inspire,
Their sovereign nostrum is a clumsy joke
On pangs enforced with God's severest stroke.
But with a soul that ever felt the sting
Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing!
Not to molest, or irritate, or raise
A laugh at his expense, is slender praise;
He that has not usurped the name of man
Does all, and deems too little all, he can
To assuage the throbbings of the festered part,
And stanch the bleedings of a broken heart.
'Tis not, as heads that never ache suppose,
Forgery of fancy, and a dream of woes;
Man is a harp, whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony disposed aright;
The screws reversed (a task which, if he please,
God in a moment executes with ease),
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,
Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use.
Then neither heatly wilds, nor scenes as fair
As ever recompensed the peasant's care,
Nor soft declivities with tufted hills,
Nor view of waters turning busy mills,
Parks in which Art preceptress Nature weds,
Nor gardens interspersed with flowery beds,
Nor gales, that catch the scent of blooming groves,
And waft it to the mourner as he roves,

Can call up life into his faded eye,
That passes all he sees unheeded by ;
No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels—
No cure for such, till God who makes them heals.
And thou, sad sufferer under nameless ill,
That yields not to the touch of human skill,
Improve the kind occasion, understand
A father's frown, and kiss his chastening hand.
To thee the dayspring and the blaze of noon,
The purple evening and resplendent moon,
The stars that, sprinkled o'er the vault of night,
Seem drops descending in a shower of light,
Shine not, or undesired and hated shine,
Seen through the medium of a cloud like thine :
Yet seek him, in his favour life is found,
All bliss beside a shadow or a sound :
Then heaven, eclipsed so long, and this dull earth,
Shall seem to start into a second birth ;
Nature, assuming a more lovely face,
Borrowing a beauty from the works of grace,
Shall be despised and overlooked no more,
Shall fill thee with delights unfelt before,
Impart to things inanimate a voice,
And bid her mountains and her hills rejoice ;
The sound shall run along the winding vales,
And thou enjoy an Eden ere it fails.

Ye groves (the statesman at his desk exclaims,
Sick of a thousand disappointed aims),
My patrimonial treasure and my pride,
Beneath your shades your gray possessor hide ;
Receive me, languishing for that repose,
The servant of the public never knows,
Ye saw me once (ah, those regretted days,
When boyish innocence was all my praise !)
Hour after hour delightfully allot
To studies then familiar, since forgot,
And cultivate a taste for ancient song,
Catching its ardour as I mused along ;

Nor seldom, as propitious Heaven might send,
What once I valued and could boast—a friend,
Were witnesses how cordially I pressed
His undissembling virtue to my breast;
Receive me now, not uncorrupt as then,
Nor guiltless of corrupting other men,
But versed in arts that, while they seemed to stay
A falling empire, hasten its decay.
To the fair haven of my native home,
The wreck of what I was, fatigued, I come;
For once I can approve the patriot's voice,
And make the course he recommends my choice:
We meet at last in one sincere desire,
His wish and mine both prompt me to retire.
'Tis done—he steps into the welcome chaise,
Lolls at his ease behind four handsome bays,
That whirl away from business and debate
The disencumbered Atlas of the state.
Ask not the boy, who, when the breeze of morn
First shakes the glittering drops from every thorn,
Unfolds his flock, then under bank or bush
Sits linking cherry-stones, or platting rush,
How fair is freedom!—he was always free:
To carve his rustic name upon a tree,
To snare the mole, or, with ill-fashioned hook,
To draw the incautious minnow from the brook,
Are life's prime pleasures in his simple view,
His flock the chief concern he ever knew;
She shines but little in his heedless eyes—
The good we never miss we rarely prize:
But ask the noble drudge in state affairs,
Escaped from office and its constant cares,
What charms he sees in freedom's smile expressed,
In freedom, lost so long, now repossessed;
The tongue, whose strains were cogent as commands,
Revered at home, and felt in foreign lands,
Shall own itself a stammerer in that cause,
Or plead its silence as its best applause.



He knows indeed, that, whether dressed or rude,
Wild without art, or artfully subdued,
Nature in every form inspires delight,
But never marked her with so just a sight.
Her hedgerow shrubs, a variegated store,
With woodbine and wild roses mantled o'er,
Green balks and furrowed lands, the stream that spreads
Its cooling vapour o'er the dewy meads,
Downs, that almost escape the inquiring eye,
That melt and fade into the distant sky,
Beauties he lately slighted as he passed,
Seem all created since he travelled last.
Master of all the enjoyments he designed,
No rough annoyance rankling in his mind,

What early philosophic hours he keeps,
How regular his meals, how sound he sleeps !
Not sounder he that on the mainmast head,
While morning kindles with a windy red,
Begins a long look-out for distant land,
Nor quits till evening watch his giddy stand,
Then, swift descending with a seaman's haste,
Slips to his hammock, and forgets the blast.
He chooses company, but not the squire's,
Whose wit is rudeness, whose good-breeding tires ;
Nor yet the parson's, who would gladly come,
Obsequious when abroad, though proud at home ;
Nor can he much affect the neighbouring peer,
Whose toe of emulation treads too near ;
But wisely seeks a more convenient friend,
With whom, dismissing forms, he may unbend.
A man whom marks of condescending grace
Teach, while they flatter him, his proper place ;
Who comes when called, and at a word withdraws,
Speaks with reserve, and listens with applause ;
Some plain mechanic, who, without pretence
To birth or wit, nor gives nor takes offence ;
On whom he rests, well-pleased, his weary powers,
And talks and laughs away his vacant hours.
The tide of life, swift always in its course,
May run in cities with a brisker force,
But nowhere with a current so serene,
Or half so clear as in the rural scene.
Yet how fallacious is all earthly bliss,
What obvious truths the wisest heads may miss !
Some pleasures live a month, and some a year,
But short the date of all we gather here ;
No happiness is felt except the true,
That does not charm the more for being new.
This observation, as it chanced, not made,
Or, if the thought occurred, not duly weighed.
He sighs—for, after all, by slow degrees
The spot he loved has lost the power to please.

To cross his ambling pony day by day,
Seems at the best but dreaming life away ;
The prospect, such as might enchant despair,
He views it not, or sees no beauty there ;
With aching heart, and discontented looks,
Returns at noon to billiards or to books,
But feels, while grasping at his faded joys,
A secret thirst of his renounced employs.
He chides the tardiness of every post,
Pants to be told of battles won or lost,
Blames his own indolence, observes, though late,
'Tis criminal to leave a sinking state,
Flies to the levee, and, received with grace,
Kneels, kisses hands, and shines again in place.
Suburban villas, highway-side retreats,
That dread the encroachment of our growing streets,
Tight boxes, neatly sashed, and in a blaze
With all a July sun's collected rays,
Delight the citizen, who, gasping there,
Breathes clouds of dust, and calls it country air.
O, sweet retirement, who would balk the thought,
That could afford retirement, or could not ?
'Tis such an easy walk, so smooth and straight,
The second milestone fronts the garden gate ;
A step, if fair, and, if a shower approach,
You find safe shelter in the next stage-coach.
There, prisoned in a parlour, snug and small,
Like bottled wasps upon a southern wall,
The man of business and his friends, compressed,
Forget their labours, and yet find no rest ;
But still 'tis rural—trees are to be seen
From every window, and the fields are green ;
Ducks paddle in the pond before the door,
And what could a remoter scene show more ?
A sense of elegance we rarely find
The portion of a mean or vulgar mind,
And ignorance of better things makes man,
Who cannot much, rejoice in what he can ;

And he that deems his leisure well bestowed
In contemplation of a turnpike road,
Is occupied as well, employs his hours
As wisely, and as much improves his powers,
As he that slumbers in pavilions, graced
With all the charms of an accomplished taste.
Yet hence, alas! insolvencies; and hence
The unpitied victim of ill-judged expense,
From all his wearisome engagements freed,
Shakes hands with business, and retires indeed.
Your prudent grandmammass, ye modern belles,
Content with Bristol, Bath, and Tunbridge Wells,
When health required it, would consent to roam,
Else more attached to pleasures found at home.
But now alike gay widow, virgin, wife,
Ingenious to diversify dull life,
In coaches, chaises, caravans, and hoys,
Fly to the coast for daily, nightly joys,
And all, impatient of dry land, agree
With one consent to rush into the sea.
Ocean exhibits, fathomless and broad,
Much of the power and majesty of God.
He swathes about the swelling of the deep,
That shines and rests, as infants smile and sleep;
Vast as it is, it answers as it flows
The breathings of the lightest air that blows;
Curling and whitening over all the waste,
The rising waves obey the increasing blast;
Abrupt and horrid as the tempest roars,
Thunder and flash upon the steadfast shores,
Till he that rides the whirlwind checks the rein,
Then all the world of waters sleeps again.
Nereids or Dryads, as the fashion leads,
Now in the floods, now panting in the meads,
Votaries of pleasure still, where'er she dwells,
Near barren rocks, in palaces, or cells,
O grant a poet leave to recommend
(A poet fond of nature and your friend)

Her slighted works to your admiring view ;
Her works must needs excel, who fashioned you.
Would ye, when rambling in your morning ride,
With some unmeaning coxcomb at your side,
Condemn the prattler for his idle pains,
To waste unheard the music of his strains,
And, deaf to all the impertinence of tongue,
That, while it courts, affronts and does you wrong,
Mark well the finished plan without a fault,
The seas, globose and huge, the o'erarching vault,
Earth's millions daily fed, a world employed
In gathering plenty yet to be enjoyed,
Till gratitude grew vocal in the praise
Of God, beneficent in all his ways ;
Graced with such wisdom, how would beauty shine !
Ye want but that to seem indeed divine.

Anticipated rents and bills unpaid,
Force many a shining youth into the shade,
Not to redeem his time, but his estate,
And play the fool, but at a cheaper rate.
There, hid in loathed obscurity, removed
From pleasures left, but never more beloved,
He just endures, and with a sickly spleen
Sighs o'er the beauties of the charming scene.
Nature, indeed, looks prettily in rhyme ;
Streams tinkle sweetly in poetic chime :
The warblings of the blackbird, clear and strong,
Are musical enough in Thomson's song ;
And Cobham's groves, and Windsor's green retreats,
When Pope describes them, have a thousand sweets :
He likes the country, but, in truth must own,
Most likes it, when he studies it in town.

Poor Jack—no matter who—for when I blame,
I pity, and must therefore sink the name—
Lived in his saddle, loved the chase, the course,
And always, ere he mounted, kissed his horse.
The estate his sires had owned in ancient years
Was quickly distanced, matched against a peer's.

Jack vanished, was regretted, and forgot ;
'Tis wild good-nature's never-failing lot.
At length, when all had long supposed him dead,
By cold submersion, razor, rope, or lead,
My lord, alighting at his usual place,
The Crown, took notice of an ostler's face.
Jack knew his friend, but hoped, in that disguise,
He might escape the most observing eyes,
And whistling, as if unconcerned and gay,
Curried his nag, and looked another way.
Convinced at last, upon a nearer view,
'Twas he, the same, the very Jack he knew.
O'erwhelmed at once with wonder, grief, and joy,
He pressed him much to quit his base employ ;
His countenance, his purse, his heart, his hand,
Influence and power, were all at his command ;
Peers are not always generous as well-bred,
But Granby was—meant truly what he said.
Jack bowed, and was obliged—confessed 'twas strange,
That so retired he should not wish a change,
But knew no medium between guzzling beer,
And his old stint—three thousand pounds a year.
Thus some retire to nourish hopeless woe ;
Some seeking happiness not found below ;
Some to comply with humour, and a mind
To social scenes by nature disinclined ;
Some swayed by fashion, some by deep disgust ;
Some self-impoverished, and because they must ;
But few that court retirement are aware
Of half the toils they must encounter there.
Lucrative offices are seldom lost
For want of powers proportioned to the post :
Give e'en a dunce the employment he desires,
And he soon finds the talents it requires ;
A business with an income at its heels
Furnishes always oil for its own wheels.
But, in his arduous enterprise to close
His active years with indolent repose,

He finds the labours of that state exceed
His utmost faculties, severe indeed.
’Tis easy to resign a toilsome place,
But not to manage leisure with a grace :
Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed.
The veteran steed, excused his task at length,
In kind compassion of his failing strength,
And turned into the park or mead to graze,
Exempt from future service all his days,
There feels a pleasure perfect in its kind,
Ranges at liberty, and snuffs the wind :
But when his lord would quit the busy road,
To taste a joy like that he has bestowed,
He proves, less happy than his favoured brute,
A life of ease a difficult pursuit.
Thought, to the man that never thinks, may seem
As natural as, when asleep, to dream ;
But reveries (for human minds will act)
Specious in show, impossible in fact,
Those flimsy webs, that break as soon as wrought,
Attain not to the dignity of thought :
Nor yet the swarms that occupy the brain,
Where dreams of dress, intrigue, and pleasure reign ;
Nor such as useless conversation breeds,
Or lust engenders, and indulgence feeds.
Whence, and what are we ? to what end ordained ?
What means the drama by the world sustained ?
Business or vain amusement, care or mirth,
Divide the frail inhabitants of earth.
Is duty a mere sport, or an employ ?
Life an intrusted talent, or a toy ?
Is there, as reason, conscience, Scripture say,
Cause to provide for a great future day,
When, earth’s assigned duration at an end,
Man shall be summoned, and the dead attend ?
The trumpet—will it sound ? the curtain rise ?
And show the august tribunal of the skies,

Where no prevarication shall avail,
Where eloquence and artifice shall fail,
The pride of arrogant distinctions fall,
And conscience and our conduct judge us all !
Pardon me, ye that give the midnight oil
To learned cares or philosophic toil,
Though I revere your honourable names,
Your useful labours, and important aims,
And hold the world indebted to your aid,
Enriched with the discoveries ye have made ;
Yet let me stand excused, if I esteem
A mind employed on so sublime a theme,
Pushing her bold inquiry to the date
And outline of the present transient state,
And, after poisoning her adventurous wings,
Settling at last upon eternal things,
Far more intelligent, and better taught
The strenuous use of profitable thought,
Than ye, when happiest, and enlightened most,
And highest in renown, can justly boast.

A mind unnerved, or indisposed to bear
The weight of subjects worthiest of her care,
Whatever hopes a change of scene inspires,
Must change her nature, or in vain retires.
An idler is a watch that wants both hands,
As useless if it goes as when it stands,
Books, therefore, not the scandal of the shelves,
In which lewd sensualists print out themselves ;
Nor those, in which the stage gives vice a blow,
With what success let modern manners show ;
Nor his who, for the bane of thousands born,
Built God a church, and laughed his Word to scorn,
Skilful alike to seem devout and just,
And stab religion with a sly side-thrust ;
Nor those of learned philologists, who chase
A panting syllable through time and space,
Start it at home, and hunt it in the dark,
To Gaul, to Greece, and into Noah's ark :

But such as learning without false pretence,
The friend of truth, the associate of sound sense,
And such as, in the zeal of good design,
Strong judgment labouring in the Scripture mine,
All such as manly and great souls produce,
Worthy to live, and of eternal use :
Behold in these, what leisure hours demand,
Amusement and true knowledge hand in hand.
Luxury gives the mind a childish cast,
And, while she polishes, perverts the taste ;
Habits of close attention, thinking heads,
Become more rare as dissipation spreads,
Till authors hear at length one general cry—
Tickle and entertain us, or we die.
The loud demand, from year to year the same,
Beggars invention, and makes fancy lame ;
Till farce itself, most mournfully jejune,
Calls for the kind assistance of a tune ;
And novels (witness every month's review)
Belie their name, and offer nothing new.
The mind, relaxing into needful sport,
Should turn to writers of an abler sort,
Whose wit well managed, and whose classic style,
Give truth a lustre, and make wisdom smile.
Friends (for I cannot stint, as some have done,
Too rigid in my view, that name to one ;
Though one, I grant it, in the generous breast
Will stand advanced a step above the rest ;
Flowers by that name promiscuously we call,
But one, the rose, the regent of them all)—
Friends not adopted with a schoolboy's haste,
But chosen with a nice discerning taste,
Well born, well disciplined, who, placed apart
From vulgar minds, have honour much at heart,
And, though the world may think the ingredients odd,
The love of virtue, and the fear of God !
Such friends prevent what else would soon succeed—
A temper rustic as the life we lead,

And keep the polish of the manners clean,
 As theirs who bustle in the busiest scene ;
 For solitude, however some may rave,
 Seeming a sanctuary, proves a grave,
 A sepulchre, in which the living lie,
 Where all good qualities grow sick and die.
 I praise the Frenchman,* his remark was shrewd—
 How sweet, how passing sweet is solitude !
 But grant me still a friend in my retreat,
 Whom I may whisper—solitude is sweet.
 Yet neither these delights, nor aught beside
 That appetite can ask, or wealth provide,
 Can save us always from a tedious day,
 Or shine the dulness of still life away;
 Divine communion, carefully enjoyed,
 Or sought with energy, must fill the void.
 O, sacred art ! to which alone life owes
 Its happiest seasons, and a peaceful close.
 Scorned in a world, indebted to that scorn
 For evils daily felt and hardly borne,
 Not knowing thee, we reap, with bleeding hands,
 Flowers of rank odour upon thorny lands,
 And, while experience cautions us in vain,*
 Grasp seeming happiness, and find it pain.
 Despondence, self-deserted in her grief,
 Lost by abandoning her own relief ;
 Murmuring and ungrateful discontent,
 That scorns afflictions mercifully meant ;
 Those humours, tart as wines upon the fret,
 Which idleness and weariness beget ;—
 These, and a thousand plagues that haunt the breast,
 Fond of the phantom of an earthly rest,
 Divine communion chases, as the day
 Drives to their dens the obedient beasts of prey.
 See Judah's promised king, bereft of all,
 Driven out an exile from the face of Saul,
 To distant caves the lonely wanderer flies,
 To seek that peace a tyrant's frown denies.

* Bruyere.

Hear the sweet accents of his tuneful voice,
 Hear him, o'erwhelmed with sorrow, yet rejoice ;
 No womanish or wailing grief has part,
 No, not a moment, in his royal heart :
 'Tis manly music, such as martyrs make,
 Suffering with gladness for a Saviour's sake ;
 His soul exults, hope animates his lays,
 The sense of mercy kindles into praise,
 And wilds, familiar with the lion's roar,
 Ring with ecstatic sounds unheard before :
 'Tis love like his that can alone defeat
 The foes of man, or make a desert sweet.

Religion does not censure or exclude
 Unnumbered pleasures harmlessly pursued ;
 To study culture, and with artful toil
 To meliorate and tame the stubborn soil ;
 To give dissimilar yet fruitful lands
 The grain, or herb, or plant that each demands :
 To cherish virtue in an humble state,
 And share the joys your bounty may create ;
 To mark the matchless workings of the power
 That shuts within its seed the future flower,
 Bids these in elegance of form excel,
 In colour these, and those delight the smell,
 Sends Nature forth, the daughter of the skies,
 To dance on earth, and charm all human eyes ;
 To teach the canvass innocent deceit,
 Or lay the landscape on the snowy sheet—
 These, these are arts, pursued without a crime,
 That leave no stain upon the wing of time.

Me poetry (or rather notes that aim,
 Feebly and vainly, at poetic fame)
 Employs, shut out from more important views
 Fast by the banks of the slow-winding Ouse ;
 Content if thus sequestered I may raise,
 A monitor's, though not a poet's praise,
 And while I teach an art too little known,
 To close life wisely, may not waste my own.

NOTE.

THE history of the following production is briefly this:—A lady, fond of blank verse, demanded a poem of that kind from the Author, and gave him the *Sofa* for a subject. He obeyed; and having much leisure, connected another subject with it; and, pursuing the train of thought to which his situation and turn of mind led him, brought forth at length, instead of the trifle which he at first intended, a poem in six books.

In the poem on the subject of Education, he would be very sorry to stand suspected of having aimed his censure at any particular school. His objections are such as naturally apply themselves to schools in general. If there were not, as for the most part there is, wilful neglect in those who manage them, and an omission even of such discipline as they are susceptible of, the objects are yet too numerous for minute attention; and the aching hearts of ten thousand parents, mourning under the bitterest of all disappointments, attest the truth of the allegation. His quarrel, therefore, is with the mischief at large, and not with any particular instance of it.



THE TASK.—BOOK I.

THE SOFA.

ARGUMENT.

Historical deduction of seats, from the stool to the sofa. A schoolboy's ramble. A walk in the country. The scene described. Rural sounds as well as sights delightful. Another walk. Mistake concerning the charms of solitude corrected. Colonnades commended. Alcove, and the view from it. The wilderness. The grove. The thrasher. The necessity and the benefits of exercise. The works of nature superior to, and in some instances inimitable by, art. The wearisomeness of what is commonly called a life of pleasure. Change of scene sometimes expedient. A common described, and the character of Crazy Kate introduced. Gipsies. The blessings of civilized life. That state most favourable to virtue. The South Sea Islanders compassionate, but chiefly Omat. His present state of mind supposed. Civilized life friendly to virtue, but not great cities. Great cities, and London in particular, allowed their due praise, but censured. Fete champetre. The book concludes with a reflection on the effects of dissipation and effeminacy upon our public measures.

I SING the SOFA. I who lately sang
Truth, Hope, and Charity, and touched with awe
The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand,
Escaped with pain from that adventurous flight,
Now seek repose upon an humbler theme:
The theme though humble, yet august and proud
The occasion—for the Fair commands the song.
Time was, when clothing, sumptuous or for use,
Save their own painted skins, our sires had none.

As yet black breeches were not ; satin smooth,
Or velvet soft, or plush with shaggy pile :
The hardy chief upon the rugged rock,
Washed by the sea, or on the gravelly bank
Thrown up by wintry torrents roaring loud,
Fearless of wrong, reposed his weary strength.
Those barbarous ages past, succeeded next
The birthday of Invention ; weak at first,
Dull in design, and clumsy to perform.
Joint-stools were then created ; on three legs
Upborne they stood. Three legs upholding firm
A massy slab, in fashion square or round.
On such a stool immortal Alfred sat,
And swayed the sceptre of his infant realms :
And such in ancient halls and mansions drear
May still be seen ; but perforated sore,
And drilled in holes, the solid oak is found,
By worms voracious eating through and through.

At length a generation more refined
Improved the simple plan ; made three legs four,
Gave them a twisted form vermicular,
And o'er the seat, with plenteous wadding stuffed,
Induced a splendid cover, green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tapestry richly wrought
And woven close, or needlework sublime.
There might you see the peony spread wide,
The full-blown rose, the shepherd and his lass,
Lap-dog and lambkin with black staring eyes,
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak.

Now came the cane from India, smooth and bright
With Nature's varnish ; severed into stripes,
That interlaced each other, these supplied
Of texture firm a lattice work, that braced
The new machine, and it became a chair.
But restless was the chair ; the back erect
Distressed the weary loins, that felt no ease ;
The slippery seat betrayed the sliding part
That pressed it, and the feet hung dangling down, *

Anxious in vain to find the distant floor.
These for the rich ; the rest, whom fate had placed
In modest mediocrity, content
With base materials, sat on well-tanned hides,
Obdurate and unyielding glassy smooth,
With here and there a tuft of crimson yarn,
Or scarlet crewel, in the cushion fixed,
If cushion might be called, what harder seemed
Than the firm oak of which the frame was formed.
No want of timber then was felt or feared
In Albion's happy isle. The lumber stood
Ponderous and fixed by its own massy weight.
But elbows still were wanting ; these, some say,
An alderman of Cripplegate contrived ;
And some ascribe the invention to a priest,
Burly and big, and studious of his ease.
But, rude at first, and not with easy slope
Receding wide, they pressed against the ribs,
And bruised the side ; and, elevated high,
Taught the raised shoulders to invade the ears.
Long time elapsed or e'er our rugged sires
Complained, though incommodiously pent in,
And ill at ease behind. The ladies first
'Gan murmur, as became the softer sex.
Ingenious Fancy, never better pleased
Than when employed to accommodate the fair,
Heard the sweet moan with pity, and devised
The soft settee ; one elbow at each end,
And in the midst an elbow it received,
United yet divided, twain at once.
So sit two kings of Brentford on one throne ;
And so two citizens who take the air,
Close packed, and smiling, in a chaise and one.
But relaxation of the languid frame,
By soft recumbency of outstretched limbs,
Was bliss reserved for happier days. So slow
The growth of what is excellent ; so hard
To attain perfection in this nether world.

Thus first necessity invented stools,
Convenience next suggested elbow chairs,
And luxury the accomplished Sofa last.
The nurse sleeps sweetly, hired to watch the sick
Whom snoring she disturbs. As sweetly he
Who quits the coachbox at the midnight hour,
To sleep within the carriage more secure,
His legs depending at the open door.
Sweet sleep enjoys the curate in his desk,
The tedious rector drawling o'er his head ;
And sweet the clerk below. But neither sleep
Of lazy nurse, who snores the sick man dead,
Nor his who quits the box at midnight hour
To slumber in the carriage more secure,
Nor sleep enjoyed by curate in his desk,
Nor yet the dozings of the clerk, are sweet,
Compared with the repose the Sofa yields.



O may I live exempted (while I live
Guiltless of pampered appetite obscene)
From pangs arthritic, that infest the toe
Of libertine Excess. The Sofa suits
The gouty limb, 'tis true ; but gouty limb,

Though on a Sofa, may I never feel ;
For I have loved the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth, close cropped by nibbling sheep,
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs ; have loved the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers' brink,
E'er since a truant boy I passed my bounds
To enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames ;
And still remember, nor without regret,
Of hours that sorrow since has much endeared,
How oft my slice of pocket store consumed,
Still hungering, penniless, and far from home,
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,
Or blushing crabs, or berries that emboss
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere.
Hard fare ! but such as boyish appetite
Disdains not ; nor the palate, undepraved
By culinary arts, unsavoury deems.
No Sofa then awaited my return ;
Nor Sofa then I needed. Youth repairs
His wasted spirits quickly, by long toil
Incurring short fatigue ; and though our years,
As life declines, speed rapidly away,
And not a year but pilfers as he goes
Some youthful grace, that age would gladly keep ;
A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees
Their length and colour from the locks they spare ;
The elastic spring of an unwearied foot,
That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence,
That play of lungs, inhaling and again
Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes
Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,
Mine have not pilfered yet ; nor yet impaired
My relish of fair prospect ; scenes that soothed
Or charmed me young, no longer young, I find
Still soothing, and of power to charm me still.
And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive

Fast locked in mine, with pleasure such as love,
Confirmed by long experience of thy worth
And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire—
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
Thou knowest my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjured up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slackened to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration, feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
Thence with what pleasure have we just discerned
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His labouring team, that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminished to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlooked, our favourite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds,
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedgerow beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the listening ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote.
Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily viewed,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years—
Praise justly due to those that I describe.
Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid nature. Mighty winds,

That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind ;
Unnumbered branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast fluttering, all at once.
Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighbouring fountain, or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and, chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that, with a livelier green,
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated nature sweeter still,
To soothe and satisfy the human ear.
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The livelong night ; nor these alone whose notes
Nice-fingered art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still repeated circles, screaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and e'en the boding owl,
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake.

Peace to the artist, whose ingenious thought
Devised the weather-house, that useful toy !
Fearless of humid air and gathering rains,
Forth steps the man—an emblem of myself !
More delicate, his timorous mate retires.
When winter soaks the fields, and female feet,
Too weak to struggle with tenacious clay,
Or ford the rivulets, are best at home,
The task of new discoveries falls on me.
At such a season, and with such a charge,
Once went I forth ; and found, till then unknown,
A cottage, whither oft we since repair :

✓Tis perched upon the green hill-top, but close
Environed with a ring of branching elms,
That overhang the thatch ; itself unseen,
Peeps at the vale below ; so thick beset
With foliage of such dark redundant growth,
I called the low-roofed lodge the peasant's nest.
And, hidden as it is, and far remote
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
In village or in town, the bay of curs
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,
And infants clamorous, whether pleased or pained,
Oft have I wished the peaceful covert mine.
Here, I have said, at least I should possess
The poet's treasure, silence, and indulge
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.
Vain thought : the dweller in that still retreat
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.
Its elevated site forbids the wretch
To drink sweet waters of the crystal well ;
He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,
And, heavy laden, brings his beverage home,
Far fetched and little worth ; nor seldom waits,
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,
Angry and sad, and his last crust consumed.
So farewell envy of the peasant's nest !
If solitude make scant the means of life,
Society for me !—thou seeming sweet,
Be still a pleasant object in my view ;
My visit still, but never mine abode.

Not distant far, a length of colonnade
Invites us. Monument of ancient taste,
Now scorned, but worthy of a better fate.
Our fathers knew the value of a screen
From sultry suns ; and, in their shaded walks
And long protracted bowers, enjoyed at noon
The gloom and coolness of declining day.
We bear our shades about us ; self-deprived

Of other screen, the thin umbrella spread,
 And range an Indian waste without a tree.
 Thanks to Benevolus*—he spares me yet
 These chestnuts ranged in corresponding lines :
 And, though himself so polished, still reprieves *releives*
 The obsolete prolixity of shade.

Descending now (but cautious, lest too fast)
 A sudden steep upon a rustic bridge,)
 We pass a gulf, in which the willows dip
 Their pendant boughs, stooping as if to drink ;
 Hence, ankle-deep in moss and flowery thyme,
 We mount again, and feel at every step
 Our foot half-sunk in hillocks green and soft,
 Raised by the mole, the miner of the soil.
 He, not unlike the great ones of mankind,
 Disfigures earth : and, plotting in the dark,
 Toils much to earn a monumental pile,
 That may record the mischiefs he has done.

The summit gained, behold the proud alcove
 That crowns it ! yet not all its pride secures
 The grand retreat from injuries impressed
 By rural carvers, who, with knives, deface
 The pan^{els}, leaving an obscure, rude name,
 In characters uncouth, and spelt amiss.
 So strong the zeal to immortalize himself
 Beats in the breast of man, that e'en a few,
 Few transient years, won from the abyss abhorred
 Of blank oblivion, seem a glorious prize,
 And even to a clown. Now roves the eye ;
 And, posted on this speculative height,
 Exults in its command. The sheepfold here
 Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
 At first, progressive as a stream, they seek
 The middle field ; but, scattered by degrees,
 Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
 There from the sunburnt hay-field homeward creeps

* John Courtney Throckmorton, Esq. of Weston Underwood



The loaded wain ; while, lightened of its charge,
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by ;
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
Vociferous, and impatient of delay.
Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,
Diversified with trees of every growth,
Alike, yet various. Here, the gray, smooth trunks ;
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,
Within the twilight of their distant shades ;
~~There~~, lost behind a rising ground, the wood

Seems sunk, and shortened to its topmost boughs.
 No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
 Though each its hue peculiar; paler some,
 And of a wanish gray; the willow such,
 And poplar, that with silver lines his leaf,
 And ash far stretching his umbrageous arm;
 Of deeper green the elm; and deeper still,
 Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak.
 Some glossy-leaved, and shining in the sun,
 The maple, and the beech of oily nuts
 Prolific, and the lime, at dewy eve
 Diffusing odours: nor unnoted pass
 The sycamore, capricious in attire,
 Now green, now tawny, and, ere autumn yet
 Have changed the woods, in scarlet honours bright.
 O'er these, but far beyond (a spacious map
 Of hill and valley interposed between),
 The Ouse, dividing the well-watered land,
 Now glitters in the sun, and now retires,
 As bashful, yet impatient to be seen.

Hence the declivity is sharp and short,
 And such the re-ascent; between them weeps
 A little (naiad) her impoverished urn
 All summer long, which winter fills again.
 The folded gates would bar my progress now,
 But that the lord* of this enclosed demesne,
 Communicative of the good he owns,
 Admits me to a share: the guiltless eye
 Commits no wrong, nor wastes what it enjoys.
 Refreshing change! where now the blazing sun!
 By short transition, we have lost his glare,
 And stepped at once into a cooler clime.
 Ye fallen avenues! once more I mourn
 Your fate unmerited, once more rejoice
 That yet a remnant of your race survives.
 How airy and how light the graceful arch,

* See the foregoing Note.

Yet awful as the consecrated roof
Re-echoing pious anthems! while, beneath,
The chequered earth seems restless as a flood
Brushed by the wind. So sportive is the light
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,
And darkening and enlightening, as the leaves
Play wanton, every moment, every spot.



And now, with nerves new braced and spirits cheered,
We tread the wilderness, whose well-rolled walks,
With curvature of slow and easy sweep—
Deception innocent—give ample space
To narrow bounds. The grove receives us next;
Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
We may discern the thrasher at his task.
Thump after thump resounds the constant flail,

That seems to swing uncertain, and yet falls
Full on the destined ear. Wide flies the chaff
The rustling straw sends up a frequent mist
Of atoms, sparkling in the noonday beam.
Come hither, ye that press your beds of down,
And sleep not ; see him sweating o'er his bread
Before he eats it.—'Tis the primal curse,
But softened into mercy ; made the pledge
Of cheerful days, and nights without a groan.

By ceaseless action all that is subsists.
Constant rotation of the unwearied wheel
That nature rides upon, maintains her health,
Her beauty, her fertility. She dreads
An instant's pause, and lives but while she moves.
Its own revolvency upholds the world.
Winds from all quarters agitate the air,
And fit the limpid element for use,
Else noxious : oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams,
All feel the froshening impulse, and are cleansed
By restless undulation ; e'en the oak
Thrives by the rude concussion of the storm :
He seems indeed indignant, and to feel
The impression of the blast with proud disdain,
Frowning, as if in his unconscious arm
He held the thunder : but the monarch owes
His firm stability to what he scorns—
More fixed below, the more disturbed above.
The law, by which all creatures else are bound,
Binds man, the lord of all. Himself derives
No mean advantage from a kindred cause,
From strenuous toil his hours of sweetest ease.
The sedentary stretch their lazy length
When custom bids, but no refreshment find,
For none they need : the languid eye, the cheek
Deserted of its bloom, the flaccid, shrunk,
And withered muscle, and the vapid soul,
Reproach their owner with that love of rest
To which he forfeits e'en the rest he loves.

Not such the alert and active. Measure life
By its true worth, the comforts it affords,
And theirs alone seems worthy of the name.
Good health, and, its associate in the most,
Good temper; spirits prompt to undertake,
And not soon spent, though in an arduous task;
The powers of fancy and strong thought are theirs;
E'en age itself seems privileged in them,
With clear exemption from its own defects;
A sparkling eye beneath a wrinkled front
The veteran shows, and, gracing a graybeard
With youthful smiles, descends towards the grave
Sprightly, and old almost without decay.

Like a coy maiden, ease, when courted most,
Farthest retires—an idol, at whose shrine
Who oftenest sacrifice are favoured least.
The love of nature, and the scenes she draws,
Is nature's dictate. Strange! there should be found,
Who, self-imprisoned in their proud saloons,
Renounce the odours of the open field
For the unscented fictions of the loom;
Who, satisfied with only pencilled scenes,
Prefer to the performance of a God
The inferior wonders of an artist's hand!
Lovely indeed the mimic works of art;
But nature's works far lovelier. I admire—
None more admires—the painter's magic skill,
Who shows me that which I shall never see,
Conveys a distant country into mine,
And throws Italian light on English walls:
But imitative strokes can do no more
Than please the eye—sweet nature every sense.
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,
And music of her woods—no works of man
May rival these; these all bespeak a power
Peculiar, and exclusively her own.
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast;

'Tis free to all—'tis every day renewed ;
 Who scorns it starves deservedly at home.
 He does not scorn it, who, imprisoned long
 In some unwholesome dungeon, and a prey
 To sallow sickness, which the vapours, dank
 And clammy, of his dark abode have bred,
 Escapes at last to liberty and light :
 His cheek recovers soon its healthful hue ;
 His eye relumines its extinguished fires ;
 He walks, he leaps, he runs—is winged with joy,
 And riots in the sweets of every breeze.
 He does not scorn it, who has long endured
 A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.
 Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflamed
 With acrid salts ; his very heart athirst
 To gaze at nature in her green array ;
 Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possessed
 With visions prompted by intense desire :
 Fair fields appear below, such as he left
 Far distant, such as he would die to find—
 He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more.

The spleen is seldom felt where Flora reigns ;
 The lowering eye, the petulance, the frown,
 And sullen sadness, that o'ershade, distort,
 And mar the face of beauty, when no cause
 For such immeasurable woe appears—
 These Flora banishes, and gives the fair
 Sweet smiles, and bloom less transient than her own
 It is the constant revolution, stale
 And tasteless, of the same repeated joys,
 That palls and satiates, and makes languid life
 A pedler's pack, that bows the bearer down.
 Health suffers, and the spirits ebb ; the heart
 Recoils from its own choice—at the full feast
 Is famished—finds no music in the song,
 No smartness in the jest ; and wonders why.
 Yet thousands still desire to journey on,
 Though halt, and weary of the path they tread.

The paralytic, who can hold her cards,
But cannot play them, borrows a friend's hand
To deal and shuffle, to divide and sort
Her mingled suits and sequences; and sits,
Spectatress both and spectacle, a sad
And silent cipher, while her proxy plays.



Others are dragged into the crowded room
Between supporters: and, once seated, sit,
Through downright inability to rise,
Till the stout bearers lift the corpse again.
These speak a loud memento. Yet e'en these
Themselves love life, and cling to it, as he
That overhangs a torrent to a twig.
They love it, and yet loathe it; fear to die,
Yet scorn the purposes for which they live.
Then wherefore not renounce them? No; the dread,
The slavish dread of solitude, that breeds
Reflection and remorse, the fear of shame,
And their inveterate habits, all forbid.

Whom call we gay? That honour has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name.
The innocent are gay—the lark is gay,
That dries his feathers, saturate with dew, ~~his~~
Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
Of dayspring overshoot his humble nest.



The peasant, too, a witness of his song,
Himself a songster, is as gay as he.
But save me from the gaiety of those
Whose headaches nail them to a noonday bed;
And save me, too, from theirs whose haggard eyes

Flash desperation, and betray their pangs
For property stripped off by cruel chance;
From gaiety, that fills the bones with pain,
The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with woe.

The earth was made so various, that the mind
Of desultory man, studious of change,
And pleased with novelty, might be indulged.
Prospects, however lovely, may be seen
Till half their beauties fade; the weary sight,
Too well acquainted with their smiles, slides off
Fastidious, seeking less familiar scenes.
Then snug enclosures in the sheltered vale,
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,
Delight us, happy to renounce awhile,
Not senseless of its charms, what still we love,
That such short absence may endear it more.
Then forests, or the savage rock, may please,
That hides the seamew in his hollow clefts,
Above the reach of man. His hoary head,
Conspicuous many a league, the mariner,
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,
Greets with three cheers exulting. At his waist,
A girdle of half-withered shrubs he shows,
And at his feet the baffled billows die.
The common, overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deformed,
And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf
Smells fresh, and, rich in odoriferous herbs,
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets.

There often wanders one, whom better days
Saw better clad, in cloak of satin trimmed
With lace, and hat with splendid ribbon bound.
A serving-maid was she, and fell in love
With one who left her, went to sea, and died.
Her fancy followed him through foaming waves

To distant shores; and she would sit and weep
 At what a sailor suffers. Fancy, too,
 Delusive most where warmest wishes are,
 Would oft anticipate his glad return,
 And dream of transports she was not to know.
 She heard the doleful tidings of his death—
 And never smiled again! and now she roams
 The dreary waste; there spends the livelong day,
 And there, unless when charity forbids,
 The livelong night. A tattered apron hides,
 Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides, a gown
 More tattered still; and both but ill conceal
 A bosom heaved with never-ceasing sighs.
 She begs an idle pin of all she meets, —
 And hoards them in her sleeve; but needful food,
 Though pressed with hunger oft, or comelier clothes,
 Though pinched with cold, asks never. — (Kate) is crazed!
 I see a column of slow rising smoke
 O'ertop the lofty wood that skirts the wild.
 A vagabond and useless tribe there eat
 Their miserable meal. A kettle, slung
 Between two poles upon a stick transverse,
 Receives the morsel—flesh obscene of dog,
 Or vermin, or at best of cock purloined
 From his accustomed perch. Hard-faring race!
 They pick their fuel out of every hedge,
 Which, kindled with dry leaves, just saves unquenched
 The spark of life.) The sportive wind blows wide
 Their fluttering rags, and shows a tawny skin,
 The vellum of the pedigree they claim.
 Great skill have they in palinistry, and more
 To conjure clean away the gold they touch,
 Conveying worthless dross into its place;
 Loud when they beg, dumb only when they steal.
 Strange! that a creature rational, and cast
 In human mould, should brutalise by choice
 His nature; and, though capable of arts
 By which the world might profit, and himself,



Self-banished from society, prefer
Such squalid sloth to honourable toil !
Yet even these, though, feigning sickness oft,
They swathe the forehead, drag the limping limb,
And vex their flesh with artificial sores,
Can change their whine into a mirthful note,
When safe occasion offers ; and with dance,
And music of the bladder and the bag,
Beguile their woes, and make the woods resound.

Such health and gaiety of heart enjoy
 The houseless rovers of the sylvan world ;
 And, breathing wholesome air, and wandering much
 Need other physic none to heal the effects
 Of loathsome diet, penury, and cold.

Blest he, though undistinguished from the crowd
 By wealth or dignity, who dwells secure,
 Where man, by nature fierce, has laid aside
 His fierceness, having learnt, though slow to learn,
 The manners and the arts of civil life.

His wants, indeed, are many ; but supply
 Is obvious, placed within the easy reach
 Of temperate wishes and industrious hands.
 Here virtue thrives as in her proper soil ;
 Not rude and surly, and beset with thorns,
 And terrible to sight as when she springs
 (If e'er she springs spontaneous) in remote
 And barbarous climes, where violence prevails,
 And strength is lord of all ; but gentle, kind,
 By culture tamed, by liberty refreshed,
 And all her fruits by radiant truth matured.
 War and the chase engross the savage whole ;
 War followed for revenge, or to supplant
 The envied tenants of some happier spot :
 The chase for sustenance, precarious trust !
 His hard condition with severe constraint
 Binds all his faculties, forbids all growth
 Of wisdom, proves a school, in which he learns
 Sly circumvention, unrelenting hate,
 Mean self-attachment, and scarce aught beside.
 Thus fare the shivering natives of the north,
 And thus the rangers of the western world,
 Where it advances far into the deep,
 Towards the Antarctic. E'en the favoured isles,
 So lately found, although the constant sun
 Cheer all their seasons with a grateful smile,
 Can boast but little virtue ; and, inert
 Through plenty, lose in morals what they gain

The Sofa.

In manners—victims of luxurious ease.
These, therefore, I can pity, placed remote
From all that science traces, art invents, .
Or inspiration teaches; and enclosed
In boundless oceans, never to be passed
By navigators uninformed as they,
Or ploughed, perhaps, by British bark again .
But far beyond the rest, and with most cause,
Thee, gentle savage! * whom no love of thee
Or thine, but curiosity, perhaps,
Or else vainglory, prompted us to draw
Forth from thy native bowers, to show thee here
With what superior skill we can abuse
The gifts of Providence, and squander life.
The dream is past; and thou hast found again
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
And homestall thatched with leaves. But hast thou found
Their former charms? And having seen our state,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage, our gardens, and our sports,
(And heard our music, are thy simple friends,
Thy simple fare, and all thy plain delights,
As dear to thee as once? And have thy joys
Lost nothing by comparison with ours?
Rude as thou art (for we returned thee rude
And ignorant, except of outward show),
I cannot think thee yet so dull of heart
And spiritless, as never to regret
Sweets tasted here, and left as soon as known.
Methinks I see thee straying on the beach,
And asking of the surge that bathes thy foot,
If ever it has washed our distant shore.
I see thee weep, and thine are honest tears,
A patriot's for his country: thou art sad
At thought of her forlorn and abject state,
From which no power of thine can raise her up.

Thus fancy paints thee, and, though apt to err,
Perhaps errs little when she paints thee thus.
She tells me, too, that, duly every morn,
Thou climb'st the mountain top, with eager eye
Exploring far and wide the watery waste
For sight of ship from England. Every speck
Seen in the dim horizon turns thee pale
With conflict of contending hopes and fears.
But comes at last the dull and dusky eve,
And sends thee to thy cabin, well prepared
To dream all night of what the day denied.
Alas! expect it not. We found no bait
To tempt us in thy country. Doing good,
Disinterested good, is not our trade.
We travel far, 'tis true, but not for nought;
And must be bribed to compass earth again
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours.

But though true worth and virtue in the mild
And genial soil of cultivated life
Thrive most, and may, perhaps, thrive only there,
Yet not in cities ~~off~~—in proud, and gay,
And gain-devoted cities. Thither flow,
As to a common and most noisome sewer,
The dregs and feculence of every land.
In cities, foul example, on most minds,
Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds,
In gross and pampered cities, sloth, and lust,
And wantonness, and gluttonous excess.
In cities, vice is hidden with most ease,
Or seen with least reproach; and virtue, taught
By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there
Beyond the achievement of successful flight.
I do confess them nurseries of the arts,
In which they flourish most; where, in the beams
Of warm encouragement, and in the eye
Of public note, they reach their perfect size.
Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaimed
The fairest capital of all the world;

By riot and incontinence the worst.
There, touched by Reynolds, a dull blank becomes
A lucid mirror, in which nature sees
All her reflected features. Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.
Nor does the chisel occupy alone
The powers of sculpture, but the style as much ;
Each province of her art her equal care.
With nice incision of her guided steel,
She ploughs a brazen field, and clothes a soil
So sterile with what charms soe'er she will,
The richest scenery and the loveliest forms.
Where finds philosophy her eagle eye,
With which she gazes at yon burning disk
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots ?
In London. Where her implements exact,
With which she calculates, computes, and scans
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world ?
In London. Where has commerce such a mart,
So rich, so thronged, so drained, and so supplied,
As London—opulent, enlarged, and still-
Increasing London ? Babylon of old
Not more the glory of the earth than she—
A more accomplished world's chief glory now.
She has her praise. Now mark a spot or two,
That so much beauty would do well to purge ;
And show this queen of cities, that so fair
May yet be foul ; so witty, yet not wise.
It is not seemly, nor of good report,
That she is slack in discipline ; more prompt
To avenge than to prevent the breach of law :
That she is rigid in denouncing death
On petty robbers, and indulges life
And liberty, and oftimes honour too,
To speculators of the public gold :
That thieves at home must hang ; but he, that puts

Into his overgorged and bloated purse
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.
Nor is it well, nor can it come to good,
That, through profane and infidel contempt
Of Holy Writ, she has presumed to annul
And abrogate, as roundly as she may,
The total ordinance and will of God;
Advancing fashion to the post of truth,
And centring all authority in modes
And customs of her own, till Sabbath rites
Have dwindled into unrespected forms,
And knees and hassocks are well nigh divorced.

God made the country, and man made the town.
What wonder, then, that health and virtue—gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all—should most abound,
And least be threatened, in the fields and groves?
Possess ye, therefore, ye who, borne about
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue
But that of idleness, and taste no scenes
But such as art contrives—possess you still
Your element; there only can ye shine;
There only minds like yours can do no harm.
Our groves were planted to console at noon
The pensive wanderer in their shades. At eve,
The moonbeam, sliding softly in between
The sleeping leaves, is all the light they wish;
Birds warbling, all the music. We can spare
The splendour of your lamps; they but eclipse
Our softer satellite. Your songs confound
Our more harmonious notes: the thrush departs
Scared, and the offended nightingale is mute.
There is a public mischief in your mirth;
It plagues your country. Folly such as yours,
Graced with a sword, and worthier of a fan,
Has made, what enemies could ne'er have done,
Our arch of empire, steadfast but for you,
A mutilated structure, soon to fall.



THE TASK.—BOOK II.

THE TIME-PIECE.

ARGUMENT.

REFLECTIONS suggested by the conclusion of the former book. Peace among the nations recommended on the ground of their common fellowship in sorrow. Prodigies enumerated. Sicilian earthquakes. Man rendered obnoxious to these calamities by sin. God the agent in them. The philosophy that stops at secondary causes reproved. Our own late miscarriages accounted for. Satirical notice taken of our trips to Fontainebleau. But the pulpit, not satire, the proper engine of reformation. The Reverend Advertiser of engraved sermons. Petit-maitre parson. The good preacher. Picture of a theatrical clerical coxcomb. Story-tellers and jesters in the pulpit reproved. Apostrophe to popular applause. Retailers of ancient philosophy expostulated with. Sum of the whole matter. Effects of sacerdotal mismanagement on the laity. Their folly and extravagance. The mischiefs of profusion. Profusion itself, with all its consequent evils, ascribed, as to its principal cause, to the want of discipline in the universities.

Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless cortiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more. My ear is pained.
My soul is sick, with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart ;
It does not feel for man : the natural bond
Of brotherhood is severed as the flax
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not coloured like his own ; and, having power



To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause,
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed
Make enemies of nations, who had else,
Like kindred drops, been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys ;
And, worse than all, and most to be deplored,
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that mercy, with a bleeding heart,

Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.
Then what is man? And what man, seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush,
And hang his head to think himself a man?
I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earned.
No; dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation prized above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave,
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.
We have no slaves at home—Then why abroad?
And they themselves, once ferried o'er the wave
That parts us, are emancipate and loosed.
Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free;
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it, then,
And let it circulate through every vein
Of all your empire; that, where Britain's power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.
Sure there is need of social intercourse,
Benevolence, and peace, and mutual aid,
Between the nations in a world that seems
To toll the death-bell of its own decease,
And, by the voice of all its elements,
To preach the general doom.* When were the winds
Let slip with such a warrant to destroy?
When did the waves so haughtily o'erleap
Their ancient barriers, deluging the dry?
Fires from beneath, and meteors† from above,
Portentous, unexampled, unexplained,
Have kindled beacons in the skies; and the old

* Alluding to the calamities in Jamaica.

† August 18, 1783.

And crazy earth has had her shaking fits
More frequent, and foregone her usual rest.
Is it a time to wrangle, when the props
And pillars of our planet seem to fail,
And nature,* with a dim and sickly eye,
To wait the close of all? But grant her end
More distant, and that prophecy demands
A longer respite, unaccomplished yet;
Still they are frowning signals, and bespeak
Displeasure in His breast who smites the earth
Or heals it, makes it languish or rejoice.
And 'tis but seemly, that, where all deserve
And stand exposed by common peccancy
To what no few have felt, there should be peace,
And brethren in calamity should love

Alas for Sicily ! rude fragments now
Lie scattered where the shapely column stood.
Her palaces are dust. In all her streets,
The voice of singing and the sprightly chord
Are silent. Revelry, and dance, and show
Suffer a syncope and solemn pause ;
While God performs upon the trembling stage
Of his own works his dreadful part alone.
How does the earth receive him?—with what signs
Of gratulation and delight her King?
Pours she not all her choicest fruits abroad,
Her sweetest flowers, her aromatic gums,
Disclosing paradise where'er he treads?
She quakes at his approach. Her hollow womb,
Conceiving thunders, through a thousand deeps
And fiery caverns, roars beneath his foot.
The hills move lightly, and the mountains smoke,
For he has touched them. From the extremest point
Of elevation, down into the abyss,
His wrath is busy, and his frown is felt.
The rocks fall headlong, and the valleys rise,

* Alluding to the fog that covered both Europe and Asia during the whole summer of 1783

The rivers die into 'offensive pools,
And, charged with putrid verdure, breathe a gross
And mortal nuisance into all the air.
What solid was, by transformation strange,
Grows fluid ; and the fixed and rooted earth,
Tormented into billows, heaves and swells,
Or, with vortiginous and hideous whirl,
Sucks down its prey insatiable. Immense
The tumult and the overthrow, the pangs
And agonies of human and of brute
Multitudes, fugitive on every side,
And fugitive in vain. The sylvan scene
Migrates uplifted ; and with all its soil
Alighting in far distant fields, finds out
A new possessor, and survives the change.
Ocean has caught the frenzy, and, upwrought
To an enormous and o'erbearing height,
Not by a mighty wind, but by that voice
Which winds and waves obey, invades the shore
Resistless. Never such a sudden flood,
Upridged so high, and sent on such a charge,
Possessed an inland scene. Where now the throng
That pressed the beach, and, hasty to depart,
Looked to the sea for safety ? They are gone,
Gone with the reflux wave into the deep—
A prince with half his people ? Ancient towers,
And roofs embattled high, the gloomy scenes
Where beauty oft and lettered worth consume
Life in the unproductive shades of death,
Fall prone : the pale inhabitants come forth,
And, happy in their unforeseen release
From all the rigours of restraint, enjoy
The terrors of the day that sets them free.
Who, then, that has thee, would not hold thee fast,
Freedom ! whom they that lose thee so regret,
That e'en a judgment, making way for thee,
Seems in their eyes a mercy for thy sake.

Such evil sin hath wrought ; and such a flame

Kindled in heaven, that it burns down to earth,
And, in the furious inquest that it makes
On God's behalf, lays waste his fairest works.
The very elements, though each be meant
The minister of man, to serve his wants,
Conspire against him. With his breath, he draws
A plague into his blood; and cannot use
Life's necessary means, but he must die.
Storms rise to overwhelm him; or, if stormy winds
Rise not, the waters of the deep shall rise,
And, needing none assistance of the storm,
Shall roll themselves ashore, and reach him there.
The earth shall shake him out of all his holds,
Or make his house his grave: nor so content,
Shall counterfeit the motions of the flood;
And drown him in her dry and dusty gulfs.
What then!—were they the wicked above all,
And we the righteous, whose fast-anchored isle
Moved not, while theirs was rocked, like a light skiff,
The sport of every wave? No: none are clear,
And none than we more guilty. But, where all
Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts
Of wrath obnoxious, God may choose his mark:
May punish, if he please, the less, to warn
The more malignant. If he spared not them,
Tremble and be amazed at thine escape,
Far guiltier England, lest he spare not thee!

Happy the man who sees a God employed
In all the good and ill that chequer life!
Resolving all events, with their effects
And manifold results, into the will
And arbitration wise of the Supreme!
Did not his eye rule all things, and intend
The least of our concerns (since from the least
The greatest oft originate); could chance
Find place in his dominion, or dispose
One lawless particle to thwart his plan,
Then God might be surprised, and unforeseen

Contingence might alarm him, and disturb
The smooth and equal course of his affairs.
This truth philosophy, though eagle-eyed
In nature's tendencies, oft overlooks ;
And, having found his instrument, forgets,
Or disregards, or, more presumptuous still,
Denies the power that wields it. God proclaims
His hot displeasure against foolish men
That live an atheist life : involves the heaven
In tempests ; quits his grasp upon the winds,
And gives them all their fury ; bids a plague
Kindle a fiery boil upon the skin,
And putrefy the breath of blooming health.
He calls for famine, and the meagre fiend
Blows mildew from between his shrivelled lips,
And taints the golden ear. He springs his mines,
And desolates a nation at a blast.
Forth steps the spruce philosopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and discordant springs,
And principles ; of causes, how they work
By necessary laws their sure effects ;
Of action and reaction. He has found
The source of the disease that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart and banish fear.
Thou fool ! will thy discovery of the cause
Suspend the effect, or heal it ? Has not God
Still wrought by means since first he made the world !
And did he not of old employ his means
To drown it ? What is his creation less
Than a capacious reservoir of means
Formed for his use, and ready at his will ?
Go, dress thine eyes with eyesalve ; ask of him,
Or ask of whomsoever he has taught ;
And learn, though late, the genuine cause of all.
England ! with all thy faults, I love thee still—
My country ! and, while yet a nook is left
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrained to love thee. Though thy clime

Be fickle, and thy year most part deformed
With dripping rains, or withered by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies,
And fields without a flower, for warmer France,
With all her vines ; nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bowers.
To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task ;
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake
Thy joys and sorrows, with as true a heart
As any thunderer there. And I can feel
Thy follies too ; and with a just disdain
Frown at effeminates, whose very looks
Reflect dishonour on the land I love.
How, in the name of soldiership and sense,
Should England prosper, when such things, as smooth
And tender as a girl all essenced o'er
With odours, and as profligate as sweet ;
Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
And love when they should fight ; when such as these
Presume to lay their hand upon the ark
Of her magnificent and awful cause !
Time was when it was praise and boast enough
In every clime, and travel where we might,
That we were born her children. Praise enough
To fill the ambition of a private man,
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue,
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own
Farewell those honours, and farewell with them
The hope of such hereafter ! They have fallen
Each in his field of glory ; one in arms,
And one in council—Wolfe upon the lap
Of smiling victory that moment won,
And Chatham heart-sick of his country's shame !
They made us many soldiers. Chatham, still
Consulting England's happiness at home,
Secured it by an unforgiving frown,

If any wronged her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,
Put so much of his heart into his act,
That his example had a magnet's force,
And all were swift to follow whom all loved.
Those suns are set. Oh, rise some other such,
Or all that we have left is empty talk
Of old achievements, and despair of new!

Now hoist the sail, and let the streamers float
Upon the wanton breezes. Strew the deck
With lavender, and sprinkle liquid sweets,
That no rude savour maritime invade
The nose of nice nobility! Breathe soft,
Ye clarionets; and softer still, ye flutes;
That winds and waters, lulled by magic sounds,
May bear us smoothly to the Gallic shore!
True, we have lost an empire—let it pass.
True; we may thank the perfidy of France,
That picked the jewel out of England's crown,
With all the cunning of an envious shrew.
And let that pass—'twas but a trick of state!
A brave man knows no malice, but at once
Forgets in peace the injuries of war,
And gives his direst foe a friend's embrace.
And, shamed as we have been, to the very beard
Braved and defied, and in our own sea proved
Too weak for those decisive blows that once
Ensured us mastery there, we yet retain
Some small pre-eminence; we justly boast
At least superior jockeyship, and claim
The honours of the turf as all our own!
Go, then, well worthy of the praise ye seek,
And show the shame ye might conceal at home
In foreign eyes!—be grooms, and win the plate
Where once your noble fathers won a crown!
'Tis generous to communicate your skill
To those that need it! Folly is soon learned:
And under such preceptors who can fail!

There is a pleasure in poetic pains

Which only poets know. The shifts and turns,
The expedients and inventions multiform,
To which the mind resorts, in chase of terms,
Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win—
To arrest the fleeting images that fill
The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast,
And force them sit till he has pencilled off
A faithful likeness of the forms he views;
Then to dispose his copies with such art,
That each may find its most propitious light,
And shine by situation, hardly less
Than by the labour and the skill it cost;
Are occupations of the poet's mind
So pleasing, and that steal away the thought
With such address from themes of sad import,
That, lost in his own musings, happy man!
He feels the anxieties of life, denied
Their wonted entertainment, all retire.
Such joys has he that sings. But ah! not such,
Or seldom such, the hearers of his song.
Fastidious, or else listless, or perhaps
Aware of nothing arduous in a task
They never undertook, they little note
His dangers or escapes, and haply find
Their least amusement where he found the most.
But is amusement all? Studious of song,
And yet ambitious not to sing in vain,
I would not trifle merely, though the world
Be loudest in their praise who do no more.
Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay!
It may correct a foible, may chastise
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,
Retrench a swordblade, or displace a patch;
But where are its sublimer trophies found?
What vice has it subdued? whose heart reclaimed
By rigour! or whom laughed into reform?
Alas! Leviathan is not so tamed:
Laughed at, he laughs again; and, stricken hard,

Turns to the stroke his adamantine scales,
That fear no discipline of human hands.

The pulpit, therefore (and I name it, filled
With solemn awe, that bids we well beware
With what intent I touch that holy thing)—
The pulpit (when the satirist has at last,
Strutting and vapouring in an empty school,
Spent all his force, and made no proselyte)—
I say the pulpit (in the sober use
Of its legitimate, peculiar powers)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of virtue's cause.
There stands the messenger of truth : there stands
The legate of the skies !—his theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders ; and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
He establishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,
And, armed himself in panoply complete
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God's elect !
Are all such teachers ?—would to heaven all were !
But hark—the doctor's voice—fast wedged between
Two empirics he stands, and with swollen cheeks
Inspires the news, his trumpet. Keener far
Than all invective is his bold harangue,
While through that public organ of report
He hails the clergy ; and, defying shame,
Announces to the world his own and theirs !
He teaches those to read, whom schools dismissed,
And colleges, untaught ; sells accent, tone,
And emphasis in score, and gives to prayer
The adagio and adante it demands.

He grinds divinity of other days
Down into modern use; transforms old print
To zigzag manuscript, and cheats the eyes
Of gallery critics by a thousand arts.
Are there who purchase of the doctor's ware?
Oh, name it not in Gath! it cannot be
That grave and learned clerks should need such aid.
He doubtless is in sport, and does but droll,
Assuming thus a rank unknown before—
Grand caterer and dry-nurse of the church!

I venerate the man whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.
To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves.
But loose in morals, and in manners vain,
In conversation frivolous, in dress
Extreme, at once rapacious and profuse;
Frequent in park, with lady at his side,
Ambling and prattling scandal as he goes;
But rare at home, and never at his books,
Or with his pen, save when he scrawls a card;
Constant at routs, familiar with a round
Of ladyships—a stranger to the poor;
Ambitious of preferment for its gold,
And well prepared, by ignorance and sloth,
By infidelity and love of world,
To make God's work a sinecure; a slave
To his own pleasures and his patron's pride;—
From such apostles, O, ye mitred heads,
Preserve the church! and lay not careless hands
On skulls that cannot teach and will not learn.

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own—
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;

In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain,
And plain in manner ; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture ; much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too ; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.



Behold the picture !—Is it like ?—Like whom ?
The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
And then skip down again ; pronounce a text ;
Cry—hem ; and reading what they never wrote
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene !

In man or woman, but far most in man,
And most of all in man that ministers
And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe
All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn ;
Object of my implacable disgust.
What !—will a man play tricks, will he indulge
A silly fond conceit of his fair form,

And just proportion, fashionable mien,
And pretty face, in presence of his God?
Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes,
As with the diamond on his lily hand,
And play his brilliant parts before my eyes,
When I am hungry for the bread of life?
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames
His noble office, and, instead of truth,
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock!
Therefore, avaunt all attitude, and stare,
And start theatric, practised at the glass!
I seek divine simplicity in him
Who handles things divine; and all besides,
Though learned with labour, and though much admired
By curious eyes and judgments ill informed,
To me is odious as the nasal twang
Heard at conventicle, where worthy men,
Misled by custom, strain celestial themes
Through the pressed nostril, spectacle bestrid.
Some, decent in demeanour while they preach,
That task performed, relapse into themselves;
And, having spoken wisely, at the close
Grow wanton, and give proof to every eye,
Whoe'er was edified, themselves were not!
Forth comes the pocket mirror. First we stroke
An eyebrow; next compose a straggling lock;
Then with an air most gracefully performed
Fall back into our seat, extend an arm,
And lay it at its ease with gentle care,
With handkerchief in hand depending low:
The better hand more busy gives the nose
Its bergamot, or aids the indebted eye
With opera-glass to watch the moving scene,
And recognise the slow retiring fair.
Now this is fulsome; and offends me more
Than in a churchman slovenly neglect
And rustic coarseness would. A heavenly mind
May be indifferent to her house of clay,

~~And~~ slight the hovel as beneath her care,
But how a body so fantastic, trim,
And quaint, in its deportment and attire,
Can lodge a heavenly mind—demands a doubt

He that negotiates between God and man,
As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
To court a grin, when you should woo a soul;
To break a jest, when pity would inspire
Pathetic exhortation; and to address
The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
When sent with God's commission to the heart.
So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip
Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,
And I consent you take it for your text,
Your only one, till sides and benches fail.
No: he was serious in a serious cause,
And understood too well the weighty terms
That he had taken in charge. He would not stoop
To conquer those by jocular exploits
Whom truth and soberness assailed in vain.
Oh, popular applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
The wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales;
But swelled into a gust—who then, alas!
With all his canvass set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power?
Praise from the rivelled lips of toothless bald
Decrepitude, and in the looks of lean
And craving poverty, and in the bow
Respectful of the smutched artificer,
Is oft too welcome, and may much disturb
The bias of the purpose. How much more,
Poured forth by beauty, splendid and polite,
In language soft as adoration breathes!
Ah, spare your idol! think him human still.

Charms he may have, but he has frailties too!
Dote not too much, nor spoil what ye admire.

All truth is from the sempiternal source
Of light divine. But Egypt, Greece, and Rome
Drew from the stream below. More favoured, we
Drink, when we choose it, at the fountain-head.
To them, it flowed much mingled and defiled
With hurtful error, prejudice, and dreams
Illusive of philosophy, so called,
But falsely. Sages after sages strove
In vain to filter off a crystal draught
Pure from the lees, which often more enhanced
The thirst than slaked it, and not seldom bred
Intoxication and delirium wild.

In vain they pushed inquiry to the birth
And springtime of the world; asked whence is man?

Why formed at all? and wherefore as he is?
Where must he find his Maker? with what rites
Adore him? Will he hear, accept, and bless?
Or does he sit regardless of his works?
Has man within him an immortal seed?

Or does the tomb take all? If he survive
His ashes, where? and in what weal or woe?
Knots worthy of solution, which alone
A Deity could solve. Their answers, vague
And all at random, fabulous and dark,
Left them as dark themselves. Their rules of life,
Defective and unsanctioned, proved too weak
To bind the roving appetite, and lead
Blind nature to a God not yet revealed.

'Tis Revelation satisfies all doubts,
Explains all mysteries, except her own,
And so illuminates the path of life,
That fools discover it, and stray no more.
Now tell me, dignified and sapient sir,
My man of morals, nurtured in the shades
Of Academus—is this false or true?

✠ Christ the abler teacher, or the schools?
If Christ, then why resort at every turn
To Athens or to Rome, for wisdom short
Of man's occasions, when in him reside
Grace, knowledge, comfort—an unfathomed store?
How oft, when Paul has served us with a text,
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully, preached!
Men that, if now alive, would sit content
And humble learners of a Saviour's worth,
Preach it who might—such was their love of truth,
Their thirst of knowledge, and their candour too!
✠ And thus it is. The pastor, either vain
By nature, or by flattery made so, taught
To gaze at his own splendour, and to exalt
Absurdly, not his office, but himself;
Or, unenlightened, and too proud to learn;
Or vicious, and not therefore apt to teach;
Perverting often, by the stress of lewd
And loose example, whom he should instruct:
Exposes and holds up to broad disgrace
The noblest function, and discredits much
The brightest truths that man has ever seen.
For ghostly counsel, if it either fall
Below the exigence, or be not backed
With show of love, at least with hopeful proof
Of some sincerity on the giver's part;
Or be dishonoured in the exterior form
And mode of its conveyance by such tricks
As move derision, or by foppish airs
And histrionic mummary, that let down
The pulpit to the level of the stage,
Drops from the lips a disregarded thing.
The weak perhaps are moved, but are not taught,
While prejudice in men of stronger minds
Takes deeper root, confirmed by what they see.
A relaxation of religion's hold
Upon the roying and untutored heart

Soon follows, and, the curb of conscience snapped,
The laity run wild. But do they now?
Note their extravagance, and be convinced.

As nations, ignorant of God, contrive
A wooden one, so we, no longer taught
By monitors that mother church supplies,
Now make our own. Posterity will ask
(If e'er posterity see verse of mine),
Some fifty or a hundred lustrums hence,
What was a monitor in George's days?
My very gentle reader, yet unborn,
Of whom I needs must augur better things,
Since Heaven would sure grow weary of a world
Productive only of a race like ours,
A monitor is wood—plank shaven thin.
We wear it at our backs. There, closely braced
And neatly fitted, it compresses hard
The prominent and most unsightly bones,
And binds the shoulders flat. We prove its use
Sovereign and most effectual to secure
A form, not now gymnastic as of yore,
From rickets and distortion, else our lot.
But thus admonished, we can walk erect—
One proof at least of manhood; while the friend
Sticks close, a mentor worthy of his charge.
Our habits, costlier than Lucullus wore,
And by caprice as multiplied as his,
Just please us while the fashion is at full,
But change with every moon. The sycophant,
Who waits to dress us, arbitrates their date;
Surveys his fair reversion with keen eye;
Finds one ill made, another obsolete,
This fits not nicely, that is ill-conceived;
And, making prize of all that he condemns,
With our expenditure defrays his own.
Variety's the very spice of life
That gives it all its flavour. We have run
Through every change that fancy, at the loom

Exhausted, has had genius to supply ;
And, studious of mutation still, discard
A real elegance, a little used,
For monstrous novelty and strange disguise.
We sacrifice to dress, till household joys
And comforts cease. Dress drains our cellar dry,
And keeps our larder lean ; puts out our fires ;
And introduces hunger, frost, and woe,
Where peace and hospitality might reign.
What man that lives, and that knows how to live,
Would fail to exhibit at the public shows
A form as splendid as the proudest there,
Though appetite raise outcries at the cost !
A man of the town dines late, but soon enough,
With reasonable forecast and despatch,
To insure a side-box station at half-price.
You think, perhaps, so delicate his dress,
His daily fare as delicate. Alas !
He picks clean teeth, and, busy as he seems
With an old tavern quill, is hungry yet !
The rout is Folly's circle, which she draws
With magic wand. So potent is the spell,
That none, decoyed into that fatal ring,
Unless by Heaven's peculiar grace, escape.
There we grow early gray, but never wise ;
There form connections, but acquire no friend ;
Solicit pleasure, hopeless of success ;
Waste youth in occupations only fit
For second childhood, and devote old age
To sports which only childhood could excuse.
There they are happiest who dissemble best
Their weariness ; and they the most polite
Who squander time and treasure with a smile,
Though at their own destruction. She that asks
Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them all,
And hates their coming. They (what can they less ?)
Make just reprisals ; and with cringe and shrug,
And bow obsequious, hide their hate of her.

All catch the frenzy, downward from her grace,
Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies,
And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,
To her, who, frugal only that her thrift
May feed excesses she can ill afford,
Is hackneyed home unlackeyed ; who, in haste
Alighting, turns the key in her own door,
And, at the watchman's lantern borrowing light,
Finds a cold bed her only comfort left.
Wives beggar husbands, husbands starve their wives,
On fortune's velvet altar offering up
Their last poor pittance—Fortune, most severe
Of goddesses yet known, and costlier far
Than all that held their routs in Juno's heaven.
So fare we in this prison-house, the world ;
And 'tis a fearful spectacle to see
So many maniacs dancing in their chains.
They gaze upon the links that hold them fast
With eyes of anguish, execrate their lot,
Then shake them in despair, and dance again !
Now basket up the family of plagues
That waste our vitals ; peculation, sale
Of honour, perjury, corruption, frauds
By forgery, by subterfuge of law,
By tricks and lies as numerous and as keen
As the necessities their authors feel ;
Then cast them, closely bundled, every brat
At the right door. Profusion is the sire.
Profusion unrestrained, with all that's base
In character, has littered all the land,
And bred, within the memory of no few,
A priesthood such as Baal's was of old,
A people such as never was till now.
It is a hungry vice ; it eats up all
That gives society its beauty, strength,
Convenience, and security, and use :
Makes men mere vermin, worthy to be trapped
And gibbeted, as fast as catchpole claws

Can seize the slippery prey, unties the knot
Of union, and converts the sacred band,
That holds mankind together, to a scourge.
Profusion, deluging a state with lusts
Of grossest nature and of worse effects,
Prepares it for its ruin : hardens, blinds,
And warps the consciences of public men,
Till they can laugh at virtue ; mock the fools
That trust them ; and in the end disclose a face
That would have shocked Credulity herself,
Unmasked, vouchsafing this their sole excuse—
Since all alike are selfish, why not they ?
This does Profusion, and the accursed cause
Of such deep mischief has itself a cause.

In colleges and halls, in ancient days,
When learning, virtue, piety, and truth
Were precious, and inculcated with care,
There dwelt a sage called Discipline. His head,
Not yet by time completely silvered o'er,
Bespoke him past the bounds of freakish youth,
But strong for service still, and unimpaired.
His eye was meek and gentle, and a smile
Played on his lips ; and in his speech was heard
Paternal sweetness, dignity, and love.
The occupation dearest to his heart
Was to encourage goodness. He would stroke
The head of modest and ingenuous worth,
That blushed at its own praise ; and press the youth
Close to his side that pleased him. Learning grew
Beneath his care a thriving vigorous plant ;
The mind was well-informed, the passions held
Subordinate, and diligence was choice.
If ere it chanced, as sometimes chance it must,
That one, among so many, overleaped
The limits of control, his gentle eye
Grew stern, and darted a severe rebuke :
His frown was full of terror, and his voice
Shook the delinquent with such fits of awe

As left him not, till penitence had won
Lost favour back again, and closed the breach.
But Discipline, a faithful servant long,
Declined at length into the vale of years :
A palsy struck his arm ; his sparkling eye
Was quenched in rheums of age ; his voice, unstrung,
Grew tremulous, and moved derision more
Than reverence in perverse, rebellious youth.
So colleges and halls neglected much
Their good old friend ; and Discipline at length,
O'erlooked and unemployed, fell sick, and died.
Then Study languished, Emulation slept,
And Virtue fled. The schools became a scene
Of solemn farce, where Ignorance in stilts,
His cap well lined with logic not his own,
With parrot tongue performed the scholar's part,
Proceeding soon a graduated dunce.
Then Compromise had place, and Scrutiny
Became stone-blind : Precedence went in truck,
And he was competent whose purse was so.
A dissolution of all bonds ensued ;
The curbs invented for the mulish mouth
Of headstrong youth were broken ; bars and bolts
Grew rusty by disuse ; and massy gates
Forgot their office, opening with a touch ;
Till gowns at length are found mere masquerade,
The tasselled cap and the spruce band a jest—
A mockery of the world ! What need of these
For gamesters, jockeys, brothellers impure,
Spendthrifts, and booted sportsmen, oftener seen
With belted waist and pointers at their heels
Than in the bounds of duty ! What was learned,
If aught was learned in childhood, is forgot ;
And such expense, as pinches parents blue,
And mortifies the liberal hand of love,
Is squandered in pursuit of idle sports
And vicious pleasures ; buys the boy a name
That sits a stigma on his father's house,

And cleaves through life inseparably close
To him that wears it. What can after-games
Of riper joys, and commerce with the world,
The lewd vain world, that must receive him soon,
Add to such erudition, thus acquired,
Where science and where virtue are professed;
They may confirm his habits, rivet fast
His folly, but to spoil him is a task
That bids defiance to the united powers
Of fashion, dissipation, taverns, stews.
Now, blame we most the nurslings or the nurse?
The children, crook'd, and twisted, and deformed,
Through want of care! or her whose winking eye
And slumbering oscitancy mars the brood?
The nurse, no doubt. Regardless of her charge,
She needs herself correction; needs to learn
That it is dangerous sporting with the world,
With things so sacred as a nation's trust—
The nurture of her youth, her dearest pledge.

All are not such. I had a brother once—
Peace to the memory of a man of worth—
A man of letters, and of manners too!
Of manners sweet as Virtue always wears,
When gay good-nature dresses her in smiles.
He graced a college,* in which order yet
Was sacred; and was honoured, loved, and wept
By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.
Some minds are tempered happily, and, mixed
With such ingredients of good sense and taste
Of what is excellent in man, they thirst
With such a zeal to be what they approve,
That no restraints can circumscribe them more
Than they themselves by choice, for wisdom's sake.
Nor can example hurt them: what they see
Of vice in others, but enhancing more
The charms of virtue in their just esteem.

If such escape contagion, and emerge
Pure from so foul a pool to shine abroad,
And give the world their talents and themselves,
Small thanks to those whose negligence or sloth
Exposed their inexperience to the snare,
And left them to an undirected choice.

See then the quiver broken and decayed
In which are kept our arrows! Rusting there
In wild disorder, and unfit for use,
What wonder, if discharged into the world,
They shame their shooters with a random flight,
Their points obtuse, and feathers drunk with wine!
Well may the church wage unsuccessful war,
With such artillery armed. Vice parries wide
The undreaded volley with a sword of straw,
And stands an impudent and fearless mark.

Have we not tracked the felon home, and found
His birthplace and his dam! The country mourns:
Mourns because every plague that can infest
Society, and that saps and worms the base
Of the edifice that policy has raised,
Swarm in all quarters; meets the eye, the ear,
And suffocates the breath at every turn.
Profusion breeds them; and the cause itself
Of that calamitous mischief has been found:
Found, too, where most offensive, in the skirts
Of the robed pedagogue! Else let the arraigned
Stand up unconscious, and refute the charge.
So when the Jewish leader stretched his arm,
And waved his rod divine, a race obscene,
Spawned in the muddy beds of Nile, came forth,
Polluting Egypt: gardens, fields, and plains
Were covered with the pest; the streets were filled;
The croaking nuisance lurked in every nook;
Nor palaces, nor even chambers, 'scaped;
And the land stank—so numerous was the fry.



THE TASK.—BOOK III.

THE GARDEN.

ARGUMENT.

Self-recollection and reproof. Address to domestic happiness. Some account of myself. The vanity of many of their pursuits who are reputed wise. Justification of my censures. Divine illumination necessary to the most expert philosopher. The question, What is truth? answered by other questions. Domestic happiness addressed again. Few lovers of the country. My tame hare. Occupations of a retired gentleman in his garden. Pruning. Framing. Greenhouse. Sowing of flower-seeds. The country preferable to the town, even in the winter. Reasons why it is deserted at that season. Ruinous effects of gaming, and of expensive improvement. Book concludes with an apostrophe to the metropolis.

As one who, long in thickets and in brakes
Entangled, winds now this way and now that,
His devious course uncertain, seeking home ;
Or, having long in miry ways been foiled,
And sore discomfited, from slough to slough
Plunging, and half-despairing of escape ;
If chance at length he find a greensward smooth
And faithful to the foot, his spirits rise,
He cherups brisk his ear-erecting steed,
And winds his way with pleasure and with ease ;
So I, designing other themes, and called
To adorn the sofa with eulogium due,
To tell its slumbers, and to paint its dreams,
Have rambled wide—in country, city, seat

Of academic fame (howe'er deserved),
Long held, and scarcely disengaged at last.
But now with pleasant pace a cleanlier road
I mean to tread. I feel myself at large,
Courageous, and refreshed for future toil,
If toil await me, or if dangers new.

Since pulpits fail, and sounding-boards reflect
Most part an empty ineffectual sound,
What chance that I, to fame so little known,
Nor conversant with men or manners much,
Should speak to purpose, or with better hope
Crack the satiric thong! 'Twere wiser far
For me, enamoured of sequestered scenes,
And charmed with rural beauty, to repose,
Where chance may throw me, beneath elm or vine,
My languid limbs, when summer sears the plains;
Or, when rough winter rages, on the soft
And sheltered sofa, while the nitrous air
Feeds a blue flame, and makes a cheerful hearth;
There, undisturbed by Folly, and apprized
How great the danger of disturbing her,
To muse in silence, or at least confine
Remarks that gall so many to the few,
My partners in retreat. Disgust concealed
Is oftentimes proof of wisdom, when the fault
Is obstinate, and cure beyond our reach.

Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall!
Though few now taste thee unimpaired and pure,
Or tasting, long enjoy thee! too infirm,
Or too incautious, to preserve thy sweets
Unmixed with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper sheds into thy crystal cup:
Thou art the nurse of Virtue, in thine arms
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again.
Thou art not known where Pleasure is adored,
That reeling goddess with the zoneless waist

■ And wandering eyes, still leaning on the arm
Of Novelty, her fickle, frail support ;
For thou art meek and constant, hating change,
And finding in the calm of truth-tried love
Joys that her stormy raptures never yield.
Forsaking thee, what shipwreck have we made
Of honour, dignity, and fair renown !
Till Prostitution elbows us aside
In all our crowded streets ; and senates seem
Convened for purposes of empire less
Than to release the adultress from her bond.
■ The adultress ! what a theme for angry verse !
What provocation to the indignant heart,
That feels for injured love ! but I disdain
The nauseous task, to paint her as she is,
Cruel, abandoned, glorying in her shame !
No : let her pass, and, charioted along
In guilty splendour, shake the public ways ;
The frequency of crimes has washed them white !
And verse of mine shall never brand the wretch
Whom matrons now, of character unsmirched,
And chaste themselves, are not ashamed to own.
Virtue and vice had boundaries in old time,
Not to be passed : and she that had renounced
Her sex's honour, was renounced herself
By all that prized it ; not for prudery's sake,
But dignity's, resentful of the wrong.
'Twas hard, perhaps, on here and there a wail,
Desirous to return, and not received ;
But was a wholesome rigour in the main,
And taught the unblemished to preserve with care
That purity, whose loss was loss of all.
Men, too, were nice in honour in those days,
And judged offenders well. Then he that sharpened,
And pocketed a prize by fraud obtained,
Was marked and shunned as odious. He that sold
His country, or was slack when she required
His every nerve in action and a stretch,

Paid, with the blood that he had basely spared,
 The price of his default. But now—yes, now—
 We are become so candid and so fair,
 So liberal in construction, and so rich
 In Christian charity, (good-natured age!)
 That they are safe, sinners of either sex,
 Transgress what laws they may. Well dressed, well bred,
 Well equipaged, is ticket good enough
 To pass us readily through every door.
 Hypocrisy, detest her as we may
 (And no man's hatred ever wronged her yet),
 May claim this merit still—that she admits
 The worth of what she mimics with such care,
 And thus gives virtue indirect applause;
 But she has burnt her mask, not needed here
 Where vice has such allowance, that her shifts
 And specious semblances have lost their use.

I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
 Long since: with many an arrow deep infix'd
 My panting side was charged, when I withdrew,
 To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
 There was I found by one who had himself
 Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
 And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
 With gentle force soliciting the darts,
 He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live.
 Since then, with few associates, in remote
 And silent woods I wander, far from those
 My former partners of the peopled scene:
 With few associates, and not wishing more.
 Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
 With other views of men and manners now
 Than once, and others of a life to come.
 I see that all are wanderers, gone astray,
 Each in his own delusions; they are lost
 In chase of fancied happiness, still woo'd
 And never won. Dream after dream ensues;
 And still they dream that they shall still succeed,

And still are disappointed. Rings the world
With the vain stir. I sum up half mankind,
And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as gay
As if created only like the fly,
That spreads his motley wings in the eye of noon,
To sport their season, and be seen no more.
The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,
And pregnant with discoveries new and rare.
Some write a narrative of wars, and feats
Of heroes little known; and call the rant
A history: describe the man, of whom
His own coevals took but little note;
And paint his person, character, and views,
As they had known him from his mother's womb
They disentangle from the puzzled skein,
In which obscurity has wrapped them up,
The threads of politic and shrewd design,
That ran through all his purposes, and charge
His mind with meanings that he never had,
Or having, kept concealed. Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract a register, by which we learn
That he who made it, and revealed its date
To Moses, was mistaken in its age.
Some, more acute and more industrious still,
Contrive creation; travel nature up
To the sharp peak of her sublimest height,
And tell us whence the stars; why some are fixed,
And planetary some; what gave them first
Rotation, from what fountain flowed their light.
Great contest follows, and much learned dust
Involves the combatants; each claiming truth,
And truth disclaiming both. And thus they spend
The little wick of life's poor shallow lamp
In playing tricks with nature, giving laws
To distant worlds, and trifling in their own.

Is't not a pity now, that tickling rheums
Should ever tease the lungs and blear the sight
Of oracles like these! Great pity, too,
That having wielded the elements, and built
A thousand systems, each in his own way,
They should go out in fume, and be forgot!
Ah! what is life thus spent! and what are they
But frantic who thus spend it! all for smoke—
Eternity for bubbles proves at last
A senseless bargain. When I see such games
Played by the creatures of a Power who swears
That he will judge the earth, and call the fool
To a sharp reckoning that has lived in vain;
And when I weigh this seeming wisdom well,
And prove it in the infallible result
So hollow and so false—I feel my heart
Dissolve in pity, and account the learned,
If this be learning, most of all deceived.
Great crimes alarm the conscience, but it sleeps
While thoughtful man is plausibly amused.
Defend me, therefore, common sense, say I,
From reveries so airy, from the toil
Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old in drawing nothing up!
'Twere well, says one sage crudite, profound,
Terribly arched, and aquiline his nose,
And overbuilt with most impending brows—
'Twere well, could you permit the world to live
As the world pleases: what's the world to you?
Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk
As sweet as charity from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How, then, should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meandering there,
And catechise it well; apply thy glass,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood

Congenial with thine own : and, if it be,
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,
To cut the link of brotherhood, by which
One common Maker bound me to the kind ?
True : I am no proficient, I confess,
In arts like yours. I cannot call the swift
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,
And bid them hide themselves in earth beneath ;
I cannot analyse the air, nor catch
The parallax of yonder luminous point,
(That seems half quenched in the immense abyss :
Such powers I boast not—neither can I rest
A silent witness of the headlong rage,
Or heedless folly, by which thousands die,
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine.

God never meant that man should scale the heavens
By strides of human wisdom. In his works,
Though wondrous, he commands us in his Word
To seek him rather where his mercy shines.
(The mind, indeed, enlightened from above,
Views him in all ; ascribes to the grand cause
The grand effect ; acknowledges with joy
His manner, and with rapture tastes his style.
But never yet did philosophic tube,
That brings the planets home into the eye
Of observation, and discovers, else
Not visible, his family of worlds,
Discover him that rules them ; such a veil
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,
And dark in things divine. Full often, too,
Our wayward intellect, the more we learn
Of nature, overlooks her Author more ;
From instrumental causes proud to draw
Conclusions retrograde, and mad mistake ;
But if his Word once teach us, shoot a ray
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and reveal
Truths undiscerned but by that holy light,

Then all is plain. Philosophy, baptized
In the pure fountain of eternal love,
Has eyes indeed ; and, viewing all she sees
As meant to indicate a God to man,
Gives him his praise, and forfeits not her own.
Learning has borne such fruit in other days
On all her branches : piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer
Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews.
Such was thy wisdom, Newton, childlike sage !
Sagacious reader of the works of God,
And in his Word sagacious. Such too thine,
Milton, whose genius had angelic wings,
And fed on manna ! And such thine, in whom
Our British Themis gloried with just cause,
Immortal Hale ! for deep discernment praised,
And sound integrity, not more than famed
For sanctity of manners undefiled.

All flesh is grass, and all its glory fades
Like the fair flower dishevelled in the wind ;
Riches have wings, and grandeur is a dream.
The man we celebrate must find a tomb,
And we that worship him ignoble graves.
Nothing is proof against the general curse
Of vanity, that seizes all below.
The only amaranthine flower on earth
Is virtue ; the only lasting treasure, truth.
But what is truth ? 'Twas Pilate's question put
To Truth itself, that deigned him no reply.
And wherefore ? will not God impart his light
To them that ask it ? Freely—'tis his joy,
His glory, and his nature to impart.
But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,
Or negligent inquirer, not a spark.
What's that which brings contempt upon a book,
And him who writes it, though the style be neat,
The method clear, and argument exact ?
That makes a minister in holy things

~~The~~ joy of many, and the dread of more,
His name a theme for praise and for reproach
That, while it gives us worth in God's account,
Depreciates and undoes us in our own !
What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,
That learning is too proud to gather up ;
But which the poor, and the despised of all,
Seek and obtain, and often find unsought ?
Tell me—and I will tell thee what is truth.

O, friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
Domestic life in rural pleasure passed !
Few know thy value, and few taste thy sweets ;
Though many boast thy favours, and affect
To understand and choose thee for their own.
But foolish man foregoes his proper bliss,
E'en as his first progenitor, and quits,
Though placed in Paradise (for earth has still
Some traces of her youthful beauty left),
Substantial happiness for transient joy.
Scenes formed for contemplation, and to nurse
The growing seeds of wisdom ; that suggest,
By every pleasing image they present,
Reflections such as meliorate the heart,
Compose the passions, and exalt the mind ;
Scenes such as these 'tis his supreme delight
To fill with riot, and defile with blood.
Should some contagion, kind to the poor brutes
We persecute, annihilate the tribes
That draw the sportsman over hill and dale,
Fearless and rapt away from all his cares ;
Should never game-fowl hatch her eggs again,
Nor baited hook deceive the fish's eye ;
Could pageantry and dance, and feast and song,
Be quelled in all our summer months' retreat ;
How many self-deluded nymphs and swains,
Who dream they have a taste for fields and groves,
Would find them hideous nurseries of the spleen,

And crowd the roads, impatient for the town!
They love the country, and none else, who seek
For their own sake its silence and its shade—
Delights which who would leave, that has a heart
Susceptible of pity, or a mind
Cultured and capable of sober thought,
For all the savage din of the swift pack,
And clamours of the field!—Detested sport,
That owes its pleasures to another's pain;
That feeds upon the sobs and dying shrieks
Of harmless nature, dumb, but yet endued
With eloquence, that agonies inspire,
Of silent tears and heart-distending sighs!
Vain tears, alas! and sighs that never find
A corresponding tone in jovial souls!
Well—one at least is safe. One sheltered hare
Has never heard the sanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,
Whom ten long years' experience of my care
Has made at last familiar: she has lost
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes—thou mayst eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee; thou mayst frolic on the floor
At evening, and at night retire secure
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarmed;
For I have gained thy confidence, have pledged
All that is human in me, to protect
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.
If I survive thee, I will dig thy grave;
And, when I place thee in it, sighing say,
I knew at least one hare that had a friend.

How various his employments whom the world
Calls idle; and who justly in return
Esteems that busy world an idler too!

* See the Note at the end of this volume.

Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
Delightful industry enjoyed at home,
And nature in her cultivated trim
Dressed to his taste, inviting him abroad—
Can he want occupation who has these?
Will he be idle who has much to enjoy?
Me, therefore, studious of laborious ease,
Not slothful, happy to deceive the time;
Not waste it, and aware that human life
Is but a loan to be repaid with use,
When He shall call his debtors to account,
From whom are all our blessings, business finds
Even here; while sedulous I seek to improve,
At least neglect not, or leave unemployed,
The mind he gave me; driving it, though slack
Too oft, and much impeded in its work
By causes not to be divulged in vain,
To its just point—the service of mankind.
He that attends to his interior self,
That has a heart and keeps it; has a mind
That hungers, and supplies it; and who seeks
A social, not a dissipated life,
Has business; feels himself engaged to achieve
No unimportant, though a silent, task.
A life all turbulence and noise may seem
To him that leads it wise, and to be praised;
But wisdom is a pearl with most success
Sought in still water and beneath clear skies:
He that is ever occupied in storms,
Or dives not for it, or brings up instead,
Vainly industrious, a disgraceful prize.

The morning finds the self-sequestered man
Fresh for his task, intend what task he may.
Whether inclement seasons recommend
His warm but simple home, where he enjoys
With her, who shares his pleasures and his heart,
Sweet converse, sipping calm the fragrant lymph,
Which neatly she prepares; then to his book

Well chosen, and not sullenly perused
 In selfish silence, but imparted oft,
 As ought occurs, that she may smile to hear,
 Or turn to nourishment, digested well.



Or if the garden with its many cares,
 All well repaid, demand him, he attends
 The welcome call, conscious how much the hand
 Of lubbard labour needs his watchful eye,
 Oft loitering lazily, if not o'erseen,
 Or misapplying his unskilful strength.
 Nor does he govern only or direct,
 But much performs himself. No works, indeed,
 That ask robust, tough sinews, bred to toil,
 Servile employ; but such as may amuse,
 Not tire, demanding rather skill than force.

Proud of his well-spread walls, he views his trees,
That meet no barren interval between,
With pleasure more than e'en their fruits afford;
Which, save himself who trains them, none can feel.
These therefore are his own peculiar charge;
No meaner hand may discipline the shoots,
None but his steel approach them. What is weak,
Distempered, or has lost prolific powers,
Impaired by age, his unrelenting hand
Dooms to the knife; nor does he spare the soft
And succulent, that feeds its giant growth,
But barren, at the expense of neighbouring twigs
Less ostentatious, and yet studded thick
With hopeful gems. The rest, no portion left
That may disgrace his art, or disappoint
Large expectation, he disposes neat
At measured distances, that air and sun,
Admitted freely, may afford their aid,
And ventilate and warm the swelling buds.
Hence summer has her riches, autumn hence,
And hence even winter fills his withered hand
With blushing fruits, and plenty not his own.*
Fair recompense of labour well bestowed,
And wise precaution; which a clime so rude
Makes needful still, whose spring is but the child
Of churlish winter, in her froward moods
Discovering much the temper of her sire.
For oft, as if in her the stream of mild
Maternal nature had reversed its course,
She brings her infants forth with many smiles;
But, once delivered, kills them with a frown.
He, therefore, timely warned himself, supplies
Her want of care, screening and keeping warm
The plenteous bloom, that no rough blast may sweep
His garlands from the boughs. Again, as oft
As the sun peeps and vernal airs breathe mild,

(245) * *Miraturque novos fructus et non sua poma.*—*Virg.*

The fence withdrawn, he gives them every beam,
And spreads his hopes before the blaze of day.

To raise the prickly and green-coated gourd,
So grateful to the palate, and when rare
So coveted, else base and disesteemed—
Food for the vulgar merely—is an art
That toiling ages have but just matured,
And at this moment unassayed in song.
Yet gnats have had, and frogs and mice, long since,
Their eulogy ; those sang the Mantuan bard,
And these the Grecian, in ennobling strains ;
And in thy numbers, Phillips, shines for aye
The solitary shilling. Pardon, then,
Ye sage dispensers of poetic fame,
The ambition of one meaner far, whose powers,
Presuming an attempt not less sublime,
Pant for the praise of dressing to the taste
Of critic appetite, no sordid fare,
A cucumber, while costly yet and scarce.

The stable yields a stercoraceous heap,
Impregnated with quick fermenting salts,
And potent to resist the freezing blast :
For, ere the beech and elm have cast their leaf
Deciduous, when now November dark
Checks vegetation in the torpid plant
Exposed to his cold breath, the task begins.
Warily, therefore, and with prudent heed,
He seeks a favoured spot ; that, where he builds
The agglomerated pile, his frame may front
The sun's meridian disc, and at the back
Enjoy close shelter—wall, or reeds, or hedge
Impervious to the wind. First he bids spread
Dry fern or littered hay, that may imbibe
The ascending damps ; then leisurely impose,
And lightly, shaking it with agile hand
From the full fork, the saturated straw.
What longest binds the closest forms secure
The shapely side, that as it rises take

By just degrees, an overhanging breadth,
Sheltering the base with its projected eaves :
The uplifted frame, compact at every joint,
And overlaid with clear translucent glass,
He settles next upon the sloping mount,
Whose sharp declivity shoots off secure
From the dashed pane the deluge as it falls.
He shuts it close, and the first labour ends.
Thrice must the voluble and restless earth
Spin round upon her axle, ere the warmth,
Slow gathering in the midst, through the square mass
Diffused, attain the surface : when, behold !
A pestilent and most corrosive steam,
Like a gross fog Bœotian, rising fast,
And fast condensed upon the dewy sash,
Asks egress ; which obtained, the overcharged
And drenched conservatory breathes abroad,
In volumes wheeling slow, the vapour dank ;
And, purified, rejoices to have lost
Its foul inhabitant. But to assuage
The impatient fervour, which it first conceives
Within its reeking bosom, threatening death
To his young hopes, requires discreet delay.
Experience, slow preceptress, teaching oft
The way to glory by miscarriage foul,
Must prompt him, and admonish how to catch
The auspicious moment, when the tempered heat,
Friendly to vital motion, may afford
Soft fomentation, and invite the seed.
The seed, selected wisely, plump, and smooth,
And glossy, he commits to pots of size
Diminutive, well filled with well-prepared
And fruitful soil, that has been treasured long,
And drunk no moisture from the dripping clouds.
These on the warm and genial earth, that hides
The smoking manure, and o'erspreads it all,
He places lightly, and, as time subdues
The rage of fermentation, plunges deep

In the soft medium, till they stand immersed.
Then rise the tender germs, upstarting quick,
And spreading wide their spongy lobes ; at first
Pale, wan, and livid ; but assuming soon,
If fanned by balmy and nutritious air,
Strained through the friendly mats, a vivid green.
Two leaves produced—two rough indented leaves—
Cautious he pinches from the second stalk
A pimple, that portends a future sprout,
And interdicts its growth. Thence straight succeed
The branches, sturdy to his utmost wish ;
Prolific all, and harbingers of more.
The crowded roots demand enlargement now,
And transplantation in an ampler space.
Indulged in what they wish, they soon supply .
Large foliage, overshadowing golden flowers,
Blown on the summit of the apparent fruit.
These have their sexes ; and, when summer shines,
The bee transports the fertilizing meal
From flower to flower, and e'en the breathing air
Wafts the rich prize to its appointed use.
Not so when winter scowls. Assistant art
Then acts in nature's office—brings to pass
The glad espousals, and insures the crop
Grudge not, ye rich (since luxury must have
His dainties, and the world's more numerous half
Lives by contriving delicacies for you)—
Grudge not the cost. Ye little know the cares,
The vigilance, the labour, and the skill,
That day and night are exercised, and hang
Upon the ticklish balance of suspense,
That ye may garnish your profuse regales
With summer fruits, brought forth by wintry suns.
Ten thousand dangers lie in wait to thwart
The process. Heat, and cold, and wind, and steam.
Moisture, and drought, mice, worms, and swarming flies,
Minute as dust, and numberless, oft work
Dire disappointment, that admits no cure,

And which no care can obviate. It were long,
Too long, to tell the expedients and the shifts
Which he that fights a season so severe
Devises, while he guards his tender trust ;
And oft at last in vain. The learned and wise,
Sarcastic, would exclaim, and judge the song
Cold as its theme, and, like its theme, the fruit
Of too much labour, worthless when produced.

Who loves a garden loves a greenhouse too.
Unconscious of a less propitious clime,
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and snug,
While the winds whistle, and the snows descend.
The spiry myrtle with unwithering leaf
Shines there, and flourishes. The golden boast
Of Portugal and Western India there ;
The ruddier orange, and the paler lime,
Peep through their polished foliage at the storm,
And seem to smile at what they need not fear.
The amomum there with intermingling flowers
And cherries hangs her twigs ; geranium boasts
Her crimson honours ; and the spangled beau,
Ficoides, glitters bright the winter long.
All plants, of every leaf, that can endure
The winter's frown, if screened from his shrewd bite,
Live there, and prosper. Those Ausonia claims,
Levantine regions these ; the Azores send
Their jessamine, her jessamine remote
Caffraia : foreigners from many lands,
They form one social shade, as if convened
By magic summons of the Orphean lyre.
Yet just arrangement, rarely brought to pass
But by a master's hand, disposing well
The gay diversities of leaf and flower,
Must lend its aid to illustrate all their charms,
And dress the regular yet various scene.
Plant behind plant aspiring, in the van
The dwarfish, in the rear retired, but still
Sublime above the rest, the statelier stand

So once were ranged the sons of ancient Rome,
A noble show ! while Roscius trod the stage ;
And so, while Garrick, as renowned as he,
The sons of Albion ; fearing each to lose
Some note of nature's music from his lips,
And covetous of Shakspeare's beauty, seen
In every flash of his far beaming eye.
Nor taste alone and well contrived display
Suffice to give the marshalled ranks the grace
Of their complete effect. Much yet remains
Unsung, and many cares are yet behind,
And more laborious ; cares on which depends
Their vigour, injured soon, not soon restored.
The soil must be renewed, which, oft and washed,
Loses its treasure of salubrious salts,
And disappoints the roots ; the slender roots
Close interwoven, where they meet the vase,
Must smooth be shorn away ; the sapless branch
Must fly before the knife ; the withered leaf
Must be detached ; and, where it strews the floor,
Swept with a woman's neatness, breeding else
Contagion, and disseminating death.
Discharge but these kind offices (and who
Would spare, that loves them, offices like these ?)
Well they reward the toil. The sight is pleased,
The scent regaled, each odoriferous leaf,
Each opening blossom, freely breathes abroad
Its gratitude, and thanks him with its sweets.
So manifold, all pleasing in their kind,
All healthful, are the employs of rural life,
Reiterated as the wheel of time
Runs round ; still ending, and beginning still.
Nor are these all. To deck the shapely knoll,
That softly swelled and gaily dressed appears
A flowery island, from the dark green lawn
Emerging, must be deemed a labour due
To no mean hand, and asks the touch of taste.
Here also grateful mixture of well matched

And sorted hues (each giving each relief,
And by contrasted beauty shining more)
Is needful. Strength may wield the ponderous spade,
May turn the clod, and wheel the compost home ;
But elegance, chief grace the garden shows,
And most attractive, is the fair result
Of thought, the creature of a polished mind.
Without it all is Gothic as the scene
To which the insipid citizen resorts
Near yonder heath ; where Industry mis-spent,
But proud of his uncouth, ill-chosen task,
Has made a heaven on earth ; with suns and moons
Of close-rammed stones has charged the encumbered soil,
And fairly laid the zodiac in the dust.
He, therefore, who would see his flowers disposed
Sightly and in just order, ere he gives
The beds the trusted treasure of their seeds,
Forecasts the future whole ; that when the scene
Shall break into its preconceived display,
Each for itself, and all as with one voice
Conspiring, may attest his bright design.
Nor even then, dismissing as performed
His pleasant work, may he suppose it done.
Few self-supported flowers endure the wind
Uninjured, but expect the upholding aid
Of the smooth-shaven prop, and, neatly tied,
Are wedded thus like beauty to old age,
For interest sake, the living to the dead.
Some clothe the soil that feeds them, far diffused
And lowly creeping, modest and yet fair,
Like virtue, thriving most where little seen ;
Some, more aspiring, catch the neighbour shrub
With clasping tendrils, and invest his branch,
Else unadorned, with many a gay festoon
And fragrant chaplet, recompensing well
The strength they borrow with the grace they lend
All hate the rank society of weeds,
Noisome, and ever greedy to exhaust



The impoverished earth ; an overbearing race,
That, like the multitude, made faction-mad,
Disturb good order, and degrade true worth.

O blest seclusion from a jarring world,
Which he, thus occupied, enjoys ! Retreat
Cannot, indeed, to guilty man restore
Lost innocence, or cancel follies past ;
But it has peace, and much secures the mind
From all assaults of evil ; proving still
A faithful barrier not o'erleaped with ease
By vicious custom, raging uncontrolled
Abroad, and desolating public life.
When fierce temptation, seconded within

By traitor appetite, and armed with darts
Tempered in hell, invades the throbbing breast,
To combat may be glorious, and success
Perhaps may crown us ; but to fly is safe.
Had I the choice of sublunary good,
What could I wish that I possess not here ?
Health, leisure, means to improve it, friendship, peace,
No loose or wanton, though a wandering muse,
And constant occupation without care.
Thus blest, I draw a picture of that bliss ;
Hopeless indeed, that dissipated minds,
And profligate abusers of a world
Created fair so much in vain for them,
Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,
Allured by my report ; but sure no less,
That self-condemned they must neglect the prize,
And what they will not taste must yet approve.
What we admire we praise ; and, when we praise,
Advance it into notice, that, its worth
Acknowledged, others may admire it too.
I therefore recommend, though at the risk
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,
The cause of piety, and sacred truth,
And virtue, and those scenes which God ordained
Should best secure them, and promote them most ;
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive
Forsaken, or through folly not enjoyed.
Pure is the nymph, though liberal of her smiles,
And chaste, though unconfined, whom I extol.
Not as the prince in Shushan, when he called,
Vainglorious of her charms, his Vashti forth,
To grace the full pavilion. His design
Was but to boast his own peculiar good,
Which all might view with envy, none partake.
My charmer is not mine alone ; my sweets,
And she that sweetens all my bitters too—
Nature, enchanting nature—in whose form
And lineaments divine I trace a land

That errs not, and find raptures still renewed,
Is free to all men—universal prize.
Strange that so fair a creature should yet want
Admirers, and be destined to divide
With meaner objects e'en the few she finds!
Stripped of her ornaments, her leaves, and flowers,
She loses all her influence. Cities then
Attract us, and neglected nature pines,
Abandoned, as unworthy of our love.
But are not wholesome airs, though unperfumed
By roses; and clear suns, though scarcely felt;
And groves, if unharmonious, yet secure
From clamour, and whose very silence charms;
To be preferred to smoke, to the eclipse
That metropolitan volcanoes make,
Whose Stygian throats breathe darkness all day long;
And to the stir of commerce, driving slow,
And thundering loud, with his ten thousand wheels!
They would be, were not madness in the head,
And folly in the heart; were England now
What England was—plain, hospitable, kind,
And undebauched. But we have bid farewell
To all the virtues of those better days,
And all their honest pleasures. Mansions once
Knew their own masters; and laborious hinds,
Who had had survived the father, served the son.
Now the legitimate and rightful lord
Is but a transient guest, newly arrived,
And soon to be supplanted. He that saw
His patrimonial timber cast its leaf,
Sells the last scantling, and transfers the price
To some shrewd sharper ere it buds again.
Estates are landscapes, gazed upon a while,
Then advertised, and auctioneered away.
The country starves, and they that feed the o'ercharged
And surfeited lewd town with her fair dues,
By a just judgment strip and starve themselves.
The wings, that waft our riches out of sight,

Grow on the gamester's elbows; and the alert
And nimble motion of those restless joints
That never tire, soon fans them all away.
Improvement, too, the idol of the age,
Is fed with many a victim. Lo, he comes!
The omnipotent magician, Brown, appears!
Down falls the venerable pile, the abode
Of our forefathers—a grave, whiskered race,
But tasteless. Springs a palace in its stead.
But in a distant spot; where, more exposed,
It may enjoy the advantage of the north,
And aguish east, till time shall have transformed
Those naked acres to a sheltering grove.
He speaks: The lake in front becomes a lawn;
Woods vanish, hills subside, and valleys rise;
And streams, as if created for his use,
Pursue the track of his directing wand,
Sinuous or straight, now rapid and now slow,
Now murmuring soft, now roaring in cascades—
E'en as he bids! The enraptured owner smiles.
'Tis finished, and yet, finished as it seems,
Still wants a grace, the loveliest it could show—
A mine to satisfy the enormous cost.
Drained to the last poor item of his wealth,
He sighs, departs, and leaves the accomplished plan,
That he has touched, retouched, many a long day
Labour'd, and many a night pursued in dreams,
Just when it meets his hopes, and proves the heaven
He wanted, for a wealthier to enjoy!
And now, perhaps, the glorious hour is come,
When, having no stake left, no pledge to ondear
Her interests, or that gives her sacred cause
A moment's operation on his love,
He burns with most intense and flagrant zeal
To serve his country. Ministerial grace
Deals him out money from the public chest;
Or, if that mine be shut, some private purse
Supplies his need with a usurious loan,

To be refunded duly, when his vote,
Well managed, shall have earned its worthy price.
Oh, innocent, compared with arts like these,
Crape, and cocked pistol, and the whistling ball
Sent through the traveller's temples! He that finds
One drop of Heaven's sweet mercy in his cup,
Can dig, beg, rot, and perish, well content,
So he may wrap himself in honest rags
At his last gasp; but could not for a world
Fish up his dirty and dependent bread
From pools and ditches of the commonwealth,
Sordid and sickening at his own success.

Ambition, avarice, penury incurred
By endless riot, vanity, the lust
Of pleasure and variety, despatch,
As duly as the swallows disappear,
The world of wandering knights and squires to town.
London engulphs them all! The shark is there,
And the shark's prey; the spendthrift, and the leech
That sucks him; there the sycophant, and he
Who, with bareheaded and obsequious bows,
Begs a warm office, doomed to a cold jail
And groat per diem, if his patron frown.
The levee swarms, as if in golden pomp
Were charactered on every statesman's door,
"Battered and bankrupt fortunes mended here."
These are the charms that sully and eclipse
The charms of nature. 'Tis the cruel gripe
That lean hard-handed poverty inflicts,
The hope of better things, the chance to win,
The wish to shine, the thirst to be amused,
That at the sound of winter's hoary wing,
Unpeople all our counties of such herds
Of fluttering, loitering, cringing, begging, loose,
And wanton vagrants, as make London, vast
And boundless as it is, a crowded coop.

O thou, resort and mart of all the earth,
Chequered with all complexions of mankind,

★ And spotted with all crimes ; in whom I see
Much that I love, and more that I admire,
And all that I abhor ; thou freckled fair,
That pleasest and yet shock'st me, I can laugh,
And I can weep, can hope, and can despond,
Feel wrath and pity, when I think on thee !
Ten righteous would have saved a city once,
And thou hast many righteous. Well for thee,
That salt preserves thee ; more corrupted else,
And therefore more obnoxious, at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had power to be,
★ For whom God heard his Abraham plead in vain.





THE TASK.—BOOK IV.

THE WINTER EVENING.

ARGUMENT.

The post comes in. The newspaper is read. The world contemplated at a distance. Address to winter. The rural amusements of a winter evening compared with the fashionable ones. Address to evening. A brown study. Fall of snow in the evening. The waggoner. A poor family-piece. The rural thief. Public-houses. The multitude of them censured. The farmer's daughter: what she was—what she is. The simplicity of country manners almost lost. Causes of the change. Desertion of the country by the rich. Neglect of magistrates. The militia principally in fault. The new recruit and his transformation. Reflection on bodies corporate. The love of rural objects natural to all, and never to be totally extinguished.

HARK ! 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge,
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright ;—
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks ;
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn ;
And, having dropped the expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful : messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some ;
To him indifferent whether grief or joy.



Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
With tears, that trickled down the writer's cheeks
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains,
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
But O the important budget! ushered in
With such heart-shaking music, who can say
What are its tidings! Have our troops awaked?
Or do they still, as if with opium drugged,
Shore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave?

Is India free? and does she wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace,
Or do we grind her still? The grand debate.
The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;
I burn to set the imprisoned wranglers free,
And give them voice and utterance once again.
* Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
Not such his evening, who, with shining face,
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and squeezed
And bored with elbow points through both his sides,
Outcolds the ranting actor on the stage;
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots, bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen, all tranquillity and smiles.
This folio of four pages, happy work!
Which not even critics criticise; that holds
Inquisitive attention while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break—
What is it but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts ambition. On the summit see
The seals of office glitter in his eyes;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them! At his heels,
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dexterous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence in soft
Meanders lubricate the course they take;

The modest speaker is ashamed and grieved
To engross a moment's notice ; and yet begs,
Begg a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.
Sweet bashfulness ! it claims at least this praise :
The dearth of information and good sense,
That it foretells us, always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here ;
There, forests of no meaning spread the page,
In which all comprehension wanders lost ;
While fields of pleasantries amuse us there
(With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion ; roses for the cheeks,
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heaven, earth, and ocean, plundered of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons, and city feasts, and favourite airs,
Ætherial journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katerfelto, with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.
'Tis pleasant, through the loopholes of retreat,
To peep at such a world ; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd ;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear.
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced
To some secure and more than mortal height,
That liberates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations ; I behold
The tumult, and am still. The sound of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me ;
Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And avarice that make man a wolf to man ;

Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats,
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flower to flower, so he from land to land ;
The manners, customs, policy of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans ;
He sucks intelligence in every clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return—a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes ;
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.

O Winter, ruler of the inverted year,
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapped in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way,
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art ! Thou hold'st the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning east,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west ; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering, at short notice, in one group
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,
Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof

Of undisturbed Retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates ;
No powdered pert, proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings ; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound.
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake :
But here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom ; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair ;
A wreath that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay.
The poet's or historian's page by one
Made vocal for the amusement of the rest ;
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out ;
And the clear voice, symphonious, yet distinct,
And in the charming strife, triumphant still,
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
On female industry : the threaded steel
Flies swiftly, and, unfelt, the task proceeds.
The volume closed, the customary rites
Of the last meal commence. / A Roman meal,
Such as the mistress of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domestic shade,
Enjoyed—~~a~~ spare feast ! a radish and an egg !
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or prescribes the sound of mirth
Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,

Start at his awful name, or deem his praise
 A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
 Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
 While we retrace with memory's pointing wand,
 That calls the past to our exact review,
 The dangers we have 'scaped, (the broken snare, ^{or})
 The disappointed foe, deliverance found
 Unlooked for, life preserved, and peace restored—
 Fruits of omnipotent, eternal love.

O evenings worthy of the gods! exclaimed
 The Sabine bard. O evenings, I reply,
 More to be prized and coveted than yours,
 As with more illumined, and with nobler truths,
 That I, and mine, and those we love, enjoy

(Is winter hideous in a garb like this!)

Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,
 The pent-up breath of an unsavoury throng,

(To thaw him into feeling) or the (smart
 And snappish) dialogue, that (flippant) wits
 Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile?

The self-complacent actor, when he views
 (Stealing a sidelong glance at a full house)
 The slope of faces, from the floor to the roof
 (As if one master spring controlled them all),

Relaxed into a universal grin,
 Sees not a countenance there that speaks of joy
 Half so refined or so sincere as ours.

Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks
 That idleness has ever yet contrived

To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,
 To palliate dulness, and give time a show.

Time, as he passes us, has a dove's wing,

Unsoiled, and swift, and of a silken sound;

But the world's time is time in masquerade!

Theirs should I paint him, has his pinions fledged
 With motley plumes; and where the peacock shows
 His azure eyes, is tinctured black and red
 With spots quadrangular of diamond form,

Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades, the emblem of untimely graves.
What should be, and what was an hour-glass once,
Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard-mace;
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.
Thus decked, he charms a world whom fashion blinds
To his true worth, most pleased when idle most;
Whose only happy are their wasted hours.
E'en misses, at whose age their mothers wore
The backstring and the bib, assume the dress
Of womanhood, fit pupils in the school
Of card-devoted time, and night by night,
Placed at some vacant corner of the board,
Learn every trick, and soon play all the game.
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?
As he that travels far oft turns aside,
To view some rugged rock or mouldering tower,
Which seen delights him not; then, coming home,
Describes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth;
So I, with brush in hand and palette spread,
With colours mixed for a far different use,
Paint cards and dolls, and every idle thing.
That fancy finds in her excursive flights.

Come, evening, once again, season of peace;
Return, sweet evening, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron step slow moving, while the night
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employed
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day:
Not sumptuously adorned, not needing aid,
Like homely-featured night, of clustering gems;
A star or two, just twinkling on thy brow,
Suffices thee: save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high,

With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.
Come, then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,
Or make me so. Composure is thy gift;
And whether I devote thy gentle hours
To books, to music, or the poet's toil;
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit;
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,
When they command whom man was born to please—
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.

Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
With lights, by clear reflection multiplied
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,
Goliath, might have seen his giant bulk
Whole without stooping, towering crest and all,
My pleasures too begin. But me, perhaps,
The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile
With faint illumination, that uplifts
The shadows to the ceiling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quivering flame.
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So spent in parlour twilight: such a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with some new theme
Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
That never felt a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one; I am conscious, and confess,
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
Me oft has fancy ludicrous and wild
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,
Trees, churches, and strange visages, expressed
In the red cinders, while, with poring eye,
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amused, have I quiescent watched
The sooty films that play upon the bars,
Pendulous, and foreboding in the view

Of superstition, prophesying still,
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach.
'Tis thus the understanding takes repose.
In indolent vanity of thought,
And sleeps, and is refreshed. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were tasked to his full strength, absorbed, and lost.



Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected powers; and, snapping short
The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves
Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.

How calm is my recess! and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
The silence and the warmth enjoyed within!
I saw the woods and fields at close of day
A variegated show; the meadows green,
Though faded; and the lands, where lately waved
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,
Upturned so lately by the forceful share.
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed
By flocks, fast feeding, and selecting each
His favourite herb; while all the leafless groves,
That skirt the horizon, wore a sable hue,
Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change!
Which even now, though silently performed,
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes.
Fast falls a fleecy shower: the downy flakes
Descending, and with never-ceasing lapse,
Softly alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thickening mantle; and the green
(And tender blade, that feared the chilling blast,
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.
In such a world, so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted; or, if found,
Without some thistly sorrow at its side;
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguished than ourselves; that thus
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,
And sympathize with others' suffering more.
Ill fares the traveller now, and he that stalks
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team.
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregated loads adhering close
To the clogged wheels; and in its sluggish pace

Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,
While every breath, by respiration strong
Forced downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He, formed to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes, and puckered cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on.
One hand secures his hat, save when with both
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.
O happy! and, in my account, denied
That sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou!
Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpaired.
The learned finger never need explore
Thy vigorous pulse; and the unhealthful east,
That breathes the spleen, and searches every bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.
Thy days roll on, exempt from household care;
Thy waggon is thy wife; and the poor beasts,
That drag the dull companion to and fro,
Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.
Ah! treat them kindly; rude as thou appear'st,
Yet show that thou hast mercy; which the great,
With needless hurry whirled from place to place,
Humane as they would seem, not always show.
(Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,)
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warmed, while it lasts, by labour, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad, and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well;

And, while her infant race, with outspread hands
 And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,
 Retires, content to quake, so they be warmed.



The man feels least, as more inured than she
 To winter, and the current in his veins
 More briskly moved by his severer toil ;
 Yet he, too, finds his own distress in theirs.
 The taper soon extinguished, which I saw
 Dangled along at the cold finger's end
 Just when the day declined ; and the brown loaf
 Lodged on the shelf, half-eaten without sauce
 Of savoury cheese, or butter, costlier still ;
 Sleep seems their only refuge : for, alas !
 Where penury is felt the thought is changed,
 And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few !
 With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care
 Ingenious parsimony takes, but just,
 Saves the small inventory—bed and stool,
 Skillet and old carved chest—from public sale.
 They live, and live without extorted alms.
 From grudging hands ; but other boast have none
 To soothe their honest pride, that scorns to beg,

Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy; choosing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earned,
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of distribution; liberal of their aid
To clamorous importunity in rags,
But oftimes deaf to suppliants who would blush
To wear a tattered garb however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth:
These ask with painful shyness, and, refused,
Because deserving, silently retire.
But be ye of good courage; time itself
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give increase;
And all your numerous progeny, well trained,
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,
And labour too. Meanwhile ye shall not want
What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.
I mean the man who, when the distant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty with most, who whimper forth
Their long complaints, is self-inflicted woe,
The effect of laziness or sottish waste.
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder; much solicitous how best
He may compensate for a day of sloth
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.
Woe to the gardener's pale, the farmer's hedge,
Plashed neatly, and secured with driven stakes
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength,
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil,
An ass's burden, and, when laden most
And heaviest, light of foot steals fast away.
Nor does the boarded hovel better guard

The well-stacked pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrenched the door, however well secured,
Where Chanticleer amidst his harem sleeps
In unsuspecting pomp. Twitched from the perch,
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,
To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,
And loudly wondering at the sudden change.
Nor this to feed his own! 'Twere some excuse,
Did pity of their sufferings warp aside
His principle, and tempt him into sin
For their support, so destitute. But they,
Neglected, pine at home; themselves, as more
Exposed than others, with less scruple made
His victims, robbed of their defenceless all.
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety that prompts
His every action, and imbrutes the man.
Oh for a law to noose the villain's neck
Who starves his own; who persecutes the blood
He gave them in his children's veins, and hates
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love!

Pass where we may, through city or through town,
Village or hamlet, of this merry land,
Though lean and beggared, every twentieth pace
Conducts the unguarded nose to such a whiff
Of stale debauch, forth issuing from the styes
That law has licensed, as makes temperance reel.
There sit, involved and lost in curling clouds
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lackey, and the groom: the craftsman there
Takes a Lethean leave of all his toil;
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the shears,
And he that kneads the dough; all loud alike,
All learned, and all drunk; the fiddle screams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wailed
Its wasted tones, and harmony unheard:
Fierce the dispute whate'er the theme; while she,

■ Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,
Perched on the signpost, holds with even hand
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays
A weight of ignorance ; in that, of pride ;
And smiles delighted with the eternal poise.
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound,
The cheek distending oath, not to be praised
As ornamental, musical, polite,
Like those which modern senators employ,
Whose oath is rhetoric, and who swear for fame !
Behold the schools in which plebeian minds,
■ Once simple, are initiated in arts,
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill !—'tis here they learn
The road that leads from competence and peace
To indigence and rapine ; till at last
■ Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her encumbered lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little : vain the attempt
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds
■ His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
The excise is fattened with the rich result
Of all this riot ; and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touched by the Midas finger of the state,
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.
Drink, and be mad then ; 'tis your country bids !
Gloriously drunk, obey the important call !
Her cause demands the assistance of your throats ;
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.

Would I had fallen upon those happier days
That poets celebrate ; those golden times,
And those Arcadian scenes, that Maro sings,
And Sidney, warbler of poetic prose.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts
That felt their virtues : innocence, it seems,
From courts dismissed, found shelter in the groves ;

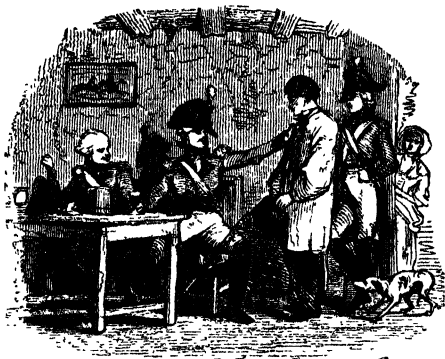
The footsteps of simplicity, impressed
Upon the yielding herbage (so they sing),
Then were not all effaced : then speech profane,
And manners profligate, were rarely found,
Observed as prodigies, and soon reclaimed.
Vain wish ! those days were never : airy dreams
Sat for the picture : and the poet's hand,
Imparting substance to an empty shade,
Imposed a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it : I still must envy them an age
That favoured such a dream ; in days like these
Impossible, when virtue is so scarce,
That to suppose a scene where she presides,
Is tramontane, and stumbles all belief.
No : we are polished now ! The rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost :
Her head, adorned with lappets pinned aloft,
And ribands streaming gay, superbly raised,
And magnified beyond all human size,
Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand
For more than half the tresses it sustains ;
Her elbows ruffled, and her tottering form
Ill propped upon French heels ; she might be deemed
(But that the basket dangling on her arm
Interprets her more truly) of a rank
Too proud for dairy work, or sale of eggs.
Expect her soon with footboy at her heels,
No longer blushing for her awkward load,
Her train and her umbrella all her care !

The town has tinged the country ; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
Down into scenes still rural ; but, alas,
Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now !

Time was when, in the pastoral retreat,
The unguarded door was safe; men did not watch
To invade another's right, or guard their own.
Then sleep was undisturbed by fear, unscared
By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unsuspecting nights,
And slumbers unalarmed! Now, ere you sleep,
See that your polished arms be primed with care,
And drop the nightbolt—ruffians are abroad;
And the first larum of the cock's shrill throat
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.
E'en daylight has its dangers; and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once
Of other tenants than melodious birds,
Of harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change! to which full many a cause
Inveterate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.
The course of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.
Increase of power begets increase of wealth;
Wealth luxury, and luxury excess;
Excess, the scrofulous and itchy plague,
That seizes first the opulent, descends
To the next rank contagious, and in time
Taints downward all the graduated scale
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
The rich, and they that have an arm to check
The license of the lowest in degree,
Desert their office; and, themselves intent
On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus
To all the violence of lawless hands
Resign the scenes their presence might protect.
Authority herself not seldom sleeps,
Though resident, and witness of the wrong.
The plump convivial parson often bears

The magisterial sword in vain, and lays
His reverence and his worship both to rest
On the same cushion of habitual sloth.
Perhaps timidity restrains his arm ;
When he should strike he trembles, and sets free,
Himself enslaved by terror of the band,
The audacious convict, whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,
He too may have his vice, and sometimes prove
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside
In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milkwhite hand ; the palm is hardly clean—
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.
Foh ! 'twas a bribe that left it : he has touched
Corruption. Whoso seeks an audit here
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,
Wildfowl or venison ; and his errand speeds.

But faster far, and more than all the rest,
A noble cause, which none, who bears a spark
Of public virtue, ever wished removed,
Works the deplored and mischievous effect.
'Tis universal soldiership has stabbed
The heart of merit in the meager class.
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,
Seem most at variance with all moral good,
And incompatible with serious thought.
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
But his own simple pleasures ; now and then
A wrestling-match, a foot-race, or a fair ;
Is balloted, and trembles at the news :
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears
A Bible-oath to be whate'er they please,
To do he knows not what. The task performed,
That instant he becomes the serjeant's care,
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,



Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,
Unapt to learn, and formed of stubborn stuff,
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,
Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well :
He stands erect ; his slouch becomes a walk ;
He steps right onward, martial in his air,
His form and movement ; is as smart above
As meal and larded loeks can make him ; wears
His hat, or his plumed helmet, with a grace ;
And, his three years of heroship expired,
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.
He hates the field, in which no fife or drum
Attends him ; drives his cattle to a march ;
And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.
'Twere well if his exterior change were all ;
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost
His ignorance and harmless manners too.
To swear, to game, to drink ; to show at home
By lewdness, idleness, and Sabbath breach,
The great proficiency he made abroad ;
To astonish and to grieve his gazing friends

To break some maiden's and his mother's heart ;
To be a pest where he was useful once—
Are his sole aim, and all his glory now.

Man in society is like a flower
Blown in its native bed : 'tis there alone
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
Shine out ; there only reach their proper use.
But man, associated and leagued with man
By regal warrant, or self-joined by bond
For interest sake, or swarming into clans
Beneath one head for purposes of war,
Like flowers selected from the rest, and bound
And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,
Fades rapidly, and, by compression marred,
Contracts defilement not to be endured.
Hence chartered boroughs are such public plagues ;
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combined,
Become a loathsome body, only fit
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life,
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature ; and, disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dyeing the white robe
Of innocent commercial justice red.
Hence too the field of glory, as the world
Misleads it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all its majesty of thundering pomp,
Enchanting music, and immortal wreaths,
Is but a school, where thoughtlessness is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for every vice.

But slighted as it is, and by the great
Abandoned, and, which still I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes

It knew not once, the country wins me still.
I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,
That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But there I laid the scene. There early strayed
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural ; rural too
The firstborn efforts of my youthful muse,
Sportive and jingling her poetic bells,
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their powers.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned
To nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his favourite beech.
Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms :
New to my taste, his paradise surpassed
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence. I danced for joy.
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
Engaged my wonder ; and admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret supposed
The joy half lost, because not sooner found.
There, too, enamoured of the life I loved,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determined, and possessing it at last
With transports, such as favoured lovers feel,
I studied, prized, and wished that I had known
Ingenious Cowley ; and, though now reclaimed
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.
I still revere thee, courtly though retired ;
Though stretched at ease in Chertsey's silent bowers,
Not unemployed ; and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse,
Thy born with all : the love of nature's works

Is an ingredient in the compound man,
Infused at the creation of the kind.
And though the Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes
And touches of his hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found
Twins at all points; yet this obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in his works,
And all can taste them: minds that have been formed
And tutored, with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmoved.
It is a flame that dies not even there,
Where nothing feeds it; neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city life,
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms, quench it or abate.
The villas with which London stands begirt,
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads,
Prove it. A breath of unadulterate air,
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!
E'en in the stifling bosom of the town,
* A garden, in which nothing thrives, has charms
That soothe the rich possessor; much consoled,
That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well
He cultivates. These serve him with a hint
That nature lives; that sight-refreshing green
Is still the livery she delights to wear,
Though sickly samples of the exuberant whole.
What are the casements lined with creeping herbs,
The prouder sashes fronted with a range
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,
The Frenchman's darling? Are they not all proofs
That man, immured in cities, still retains
His inborn inextinguishable thirst

Of rural scenes, compensating his loss
By supplemental shifts the best he may !
The most unfurnished with the means of life,
And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds,
To range the fields, and treat their lungs with air,
Yet feel the burning instinct ; overhead
Suspend their crazy boxes, planted thick,
And watered duly. There the pitcher stands,
A fragment, and the spoutless teapot there ;
Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets
The country, with what ardour he contrives
A peep at nature, when he can no more.

Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease,
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys,
And harmless pleasures, in the thronged abode
Of multitudes unknown ! Hail, rural life !
Address himself who will to the pursuit
Of honours, or emolument, or fame ;
I shall not add myself to such a chase,
Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.
Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents. And God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.
To the deliverer of an injured land,
He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart
To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs ;
To monarchs dignity ; to judges sense ;
To artists ingenuity and skill ;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wished



THE TASK.—BOOK V.

THE WINTER MORNING WALK.

ARGUMENT.

A frosty morning. The foddering of cattle. The woodman and his dog. The poultry. Whimsical effects of frost at a waterfall. The Empress of Russia's palace of ice. Amusements of monarchs. War, one of them. Wars, whence. And whence monarchy. The evils of it. English and French loyalty contrasted. The Bastille, and a prisoner there. Liberty the chief recommendation of this country. Modern patriotism questionable, and why. The perishable nature of the best human institutions. Spiritual liberty not perishable. The slavish state of man by nature. Deliver him, Deist, if you can. Grace must do it. The respective merits of patriots and martyrs stated. Their different treatment. Happy freedom of the man whom grace makes free. His reliish of the works of God. Address to the Creator.

'Tis morning; and the sun, with ruddy orb
Ascending, fires the horizon; while the clouds,
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the disk emerges more,
Resemble most some city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
And, tinging all with his own rosy hue,
From every herb and every spiry blade
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
Mine, spindling into longitude immense,
In spite of gravity and sage remark,

That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance,
I view the muscular proportioned limb
Transformed to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,
As they designed to mock me, at my side



Take step for step ; and, as I near approach
The cottage, walk along the plastered wall,
Preposterous sight ! the legs without the man.
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
Beneath the dazzling deluge ; and the bents,
And coarser grass, upspearing o'er the rest,
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine
Conspicuous, and, in bright apparel clad,
And fledged with icy feathers, nod superb.

The cattle mourn in corners, where the fence
Screens them, and seem half petrified to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait
Their wonted fodder; not like hungering man,
Fretful if unsupplied; but silent, meek,
And patient of the slow-paced swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out the accustomed load,
Deep plunging, and again deep plunging oft,
His broad keen knife into the solid mass:
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force
He severs it away: no needless care,
Lest storms should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcerned
The cheerful haunts of man; to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropped short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel,
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a frisk
Wide scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powdered coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,
But now and then with pressure of his thumb
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.
Now from the roost, or from the neighbouring pale,
Where, diligent to catch the first faint gleam
Of smiling day, they gossiped side by side,
Come trooping at the housewife's well-known call
The feathered tribes domestic. Half on wing,
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,
Conscious and fearful of too deep a plunge.



The sparrows peep, and quit the sheltering caves,
To seize the fair occasion ; well they eye
The scattered grain, and thievishly resolved
To escape the impending famine, often scared
As oft return, a pert voracious kind.
Clean riddance quickly made, one only care
Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,
Or shed impervious to the blast. Resigned
To sad necessity, the cock foregoes
His wonted strut ; and, wading at their head

With well-considered steps, seems to resent
His altered gait and stateliness retrenched.
How find the myriads, that in summer cheer
The hills and valleys with their ceaseless songs,
Due sustenance, or where subsist they now?
Earth yields them nought: the imprisoned worm is safe
Beneath the frozen clod; all seeds of herbs
Lie covered close; and berry-bearing thorns,
That feed the thrush (whatever some suppose),
Afford the smaller minstrels no supply.
The long protracted rigour of the year
Thins all their numerous flocks. In chinks and holes,
Ten thousand seek an unmolested end,
As instinct prompts—self-buried ere they die.
The very rooks and daws forsake the fields,
Where neither grub, nor root, nor earth-nut, now
Repays their labour more; and perched aloft
By the wayside, or stalking in the path,
Lean pensioners upon the traveller's track,
Pick up their nauseous dole, though sweet to them,
Of voided pulse or half-digested grain.
The streams are lost amid the splendid blank,
O'erwhelming all distinction. On the flood,
Indurated and fixed, the snowy weight
Lies undissolved; while silently beneath,
And unperceived, the current steals away.
Not so where, scornful of a check, it leaps
The milldam, dashes on the restless wheel,
And wantons in the pebbly gulf below!
No frost can bind it there; its utmost force
Can but arrest the light and smoky mist
That in its fall the liquid sheet throws wide.
And see where it has hung the embroidered banks
With forms so various, that no powers of art,
The pencil or the pen, may trace the scene!
Here glittering turrets rise, upbearing high
(Fantastic misarrangement!) on the roof
Large growth of what may seem the sparkling trees

And shrubs of fairyland. The crystal drops
That trickle down the branches, fast congealed,
Shoot into pillars of pellucid length,
And prop the pile they but adorned before.
Here grotto within grotto safe defies
The sunbeam; there embossed and fretted wild,
The growing wonder takes a thousand shapes
Capricious, in which fancy seeks in vain
The likeness of some object seen before.
Thus nature works as if to mock at art,
And in defiance of her rival powers;
By these fortuitous and random strokes,
Performing such inimitable feats
As she with all her rules can never reach.
Less worthy of applause, though more admired,
Because a novelty, the work of man,
Imperial mistress of the fur-clad Russ!
Thy most magnificent and mighty freak,
The wonder of the north. No forest fell
When thou wouldst build; no quarry sent its stores
To enrich thy walls: but thou didst hew the floods,
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.
In such a palace, Aristæus found
Cyrene, when he bore the plaintive tale
Of his lost bees to her maternal ear:
In such a palace, poetry might place
The armoury of winter; where his troops,
The gloomy clouds, find weapons, arrowy sleet,
Skin-piercing volley, blossom-bruising hail,
And snow, that often blinds the traveller's course,
And wraps him in an unexpected tomb.
Silently as a dream the fabric rose;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there;
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon conjoined; nor other cement asked
Than water interfused to make them one.
Lamps, gracefully disposed, and of all hues,
Illumined every side: a watery light

Gleamed through the clear transparency, that seemed
Another moon new risen, or meteor fallen
From heaven to earth, of lambent flame serene.
So stood the brittle prodigy; though smooth
And slippery the materials, yet frost-bound,
Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within,
That royal residence might well befit,
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths
Of flowers, that feared no enemy but warmth,
Blushed on the pannels. Mirror needed none
Where all was vitreous; but, in order due,
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What seemed at least commodious seat) were there :
Sofa, and couch, and high-built throne august,
The same lubricity was found in all,
And all was moist to the warm touch; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again.
Alas! 'twas but a mortifying stroke
Of undesigned severity, that glanced
(Made by a monarch) on her own estate,
On human grandeur and the courts of kings.
'Twas transient in its nature, as in show
'Twas durable; as worthless as it seemed
Intrinsically precious; to the foot
Treacherous and false; it smiled, and it was cold.

Great princes have great playthings. Some have played
At hewing mountains into men, and some
At building human wonders mountain high.
Some have amused the dull sad years of life
(Life spent in indolence, and therefore sad)
With schemes of monumental fame; and sought
By pyramids and mausolean pomp,
Short-lived themselves, to immortalize their bones.
Some seek diversion in the tented field,
And make the sorrows of mankind their sport.
But war's a game which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at. Nations would do well

To extort their truncheons from the puny hands
Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief, and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy, the world.

When Babel was confounded, and the great
Confederacy of projectors wild and vain,
Was split into diversity of tongues,
Then, as a shepherd separates his flock,
These to the upland, to the valley those,
God drave asunder, and assigned their lot
To all the nations. Ample was the boon
He gave them, in its distribution fair
And equal; and he bade them dwell in peace.
Peace was awhile their care: they ploughed and sowed,
And reaped their plenty without grudge or strife,
But violence can never longer sleep
Than human passions please. In every heart
Are sown the sparks that kindle fiery war;
Occasion needs but fan them, and they blaze.
Cain had already shed a brother's blood;
The deluge washed it out; but left unquenched
The seeds of murder in the breast of man;
Soon by a righteous judgment in the line
Of his descending progeny was found
The first artificer of death; the shrewd
Contriver, who first sweated at the forge
And forced the blunt and yet unbloodied steel
To a keen edge, and made it bright for war.
Him, Tubal named, the Vulcan of old times,
The sword and falchion their inventor claim;
And the first smith was the first murderer's son.
His art survived the waters; and ere long,
When man was multiplied and spread abroad
In tribes and clans, and had begun to call
These meadows and that range of hills his own,
The tasted sweets of property begat
Desire of more; and industry in some,
To improve and cultivate their just demesne,

Made others covet what they saw so fair.
Thus war began on earth : these fought for spoil,
And those in self-defence. Savage at first
The onset, and irregular. At length,
One eminent above the rest for strength,
For stratagem, or courage, or for all,
Was chosen leader ; him they served in war,
And him in peace, for sake of warlike deeds,
Reverenced no less. Who could with him compare,
Or who so worthy to control themselves,
As he, whose prowess had subdued their foes ?
Thus war, affording field for the display
Of virtue, made one chief, whom times of peace,
Which have their exigencies too, and call
For skill in government, at length made king.
King was a name too proud for man to wear
With modesty and meekness ; and the crown,
So dazzling in their eyes who set it on,
Was sure to intoxicate the brows it bound.
It is the abject property of most,
That, being parcel of the common mass,
And destitute of means to raise themselves,
They sink, and settle lower than they need.
They know not what it is to feel within
A comprehensive faculty that grasps
Great purposes with ease, that turns and wields,
Almost without an effort, plans too vast
For their conception, which they cannot move.
Conscious of impotence, they soon grow drunk
With gazing, when they see an able man
Step forth to notice ; and, besotted thus,
Build him a pedestal, and say, "Stand there,
And be our admiration and our praise."
They roll themselves before him in the dust,
Then most deserving in their own account,
When most extravagant in his applause,
As if, exalting him, they raised themselves.
Thus by degrees, self-cheated of their sound

And sober judgment, that he is but man,
They demi-deify and fume him so,
That in due season he forgets it too.
Inflated and astrut with self-conceit,
He gulps the windy diet; and ere long,
Adopting their mistake, profoundly thinks
The world was made in vain, if not for him.
Thenceforth they are his cattle: drudges, born
To bear his burdens, drawing in his gears,
And sweating in his service, his caprice
Becomes the soul that animates them all.
He deems a thousand, or ten thousand lives,
Spent in the purchase of renown for him,
An easy reckoning; and they think the same,
Thus kings were first invented, and thus kings
Were burnished into heroes, and became
The arbiters of this terraqueous swamp;
Storks among frogs, that have but croaked and died.
Strange, that such folly as lifts bloated man
To eminence, fit only for a god,
Should ever drivel out of human lips,
E'en in the cradled weakness of the world!
Still stranger much, that, when at length mankind
Had reached the sinewy firmness of their youth,
And could discriminate and argue well
On subjects more mysterious, they were yet
Babes in the cause of freedom, and should fear
And quake before the gods themselves had made.
But above measure strange, that neither proof
Of sad experience, nor examples set
By some, whose patriot virtue has prevailed,
Can even now, when they are grown mature
In wisdom, and with philosophic deeds
Familiar, serve to emancipate the rest!
Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
To reverence what is ancient, and can plead
A course of long observance for its use,
That even servitude, the worst of ills,

Because delivered down from sire to son,
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing !
But is it fit, or can it bear the shock
Of rational discussion, that a man,
Compounded and made up like other men
Of elements tumultuous ; in whom lust
And folly in as ample measure meet,
As in the bosoms of the slaves he rules,
Should be a despot absolute, and boast
Himself the only freeman of his land ?
Should, when he pleases, and on whom he will,
Wage war, with any or with no pretence
Of provocation given, or wrong sustained,
And force the beggarly last doit, by means
That his own humour dictates, from the clutch
Of poverty, that thus he may procure
His thousands, weary of penurious life,
A splendid opportunity to die ?
Say ye, who (with less prudence than of old
Jotham ascribed to his assembled trees -
In politic convention) put your trust
In the shadow of a bramble, and, reclined
In fancied peace beneath his dangerous branch,
Rejoice in him, and celebrate his sway,
Where find ye passive fortitude ? Whence springs
Your self-denying zeal, that holds it good
To stroke the prickly grievancé, and to hang
His thorns with streamers of continual praise ?
We too are friends to loyalty. We love
The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
And reigns content within them : him we serve
Freely and with delight, who leaves us free.
But, recollecting still that he is man,
We trust him not too far. King though he be,
And king in England too, he may be weak,
And vain enough to be ambitious still ;
May exercise amiss his proper powers,
Or covet more than freemen choose to grant :

Beyond that mark is treason. He is ours,
To administer, to guard, to adorn the state,
But not to warp or change it. We are his,
To serve him nobly in the common cause,
True to the death—but not to be his slaves.
Mark now the difference, ye that boast your love
Of kings, between your loyalty and ours.
We love the man, the paltry pageant you :
We, the chief patron of the commonwealth,
You, the regardless author of its woes :
We, for the sake of liberty, a king,
You, chains and bondage, for a tyrant's sake.
Our love is principle, and has its root
In reason—is judicious, manly, free ;
Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod,
And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.
Were kingship as true treasure as it seems,
Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,
I would not be a king to be beloved
Causeless, and daubed with undiscerning praise,
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.
Whose freedom is by sufferance, and at will
Of a superior, he is never free.
Who lives, and is not weary of a life
Exposed to manacles, deserves them well.
The state that strives for liberty, though foiled,
And forced to abandon what she bravely sought,
Deserves at least applause for her attempt,
And pity for her loss. But that's a cause
Not often unsuccessful : power usurped
Is weakness when opposed ; conscious of wrong,
'Tis pusillanimous and prone to flight.
But slaves, that once conceive the glowing thought
Of freedom, in that hope itself possess
All that the contest calls for : spirit, strength,
The scorn of danger, and united hearts—

The surest presage of the good they seek.

Then shame to manhood, and opprobrious more
To France than all her losses and defeats,
Old or of later date, by sea or land,
Her house of bondage, worse than that of old
Which God avenged on Pharaoh—the Bastile.
Ye horrid towers, the abode of broken hearts;
Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,
That monarchs have supplied from age to age
With music, such as suits their sovereign ears—
The sighs and groans of miserable men!
There's not an English heart that would not leap
To hear that ye were fallen at last; to know
That e'en your enemies, so oft employed
In forging chains for us, themselves were free.
For he who values liberty confines
His zeal for her predominance within
No narrow bounds; her cause engages him
Wherever pleaded.—'Tis the cause of man.
There dwell the most forlorn of human kind.
Immured though unaccused, condemned untried,
Cruelly spared, and hopeless of escape!
There, like the visionary emblem seen
By him of Babylon, life stands a stump,
And, filleted about with hoops of brass,
Still lives, though all his pleasant boughs are gone,
To count the hour-bell, and expect no change;
And ever, as the sullen sound is heard,
Still to reflect, that though a joyless note
To him whose moments have all one dull pace,
Ten thousand rovers in the world at large
Account it music; that it summons some
To theatre, or jocund feast, or ball:
The wearied hireling finds it a release

* The author hopes that he shall not be censured for unnecessary warmth upon so interesting a subject. He is aware that it is become almost fashionable to stigmatize such sentiments as no better than empty declamation; but it is an ill symptom, and peculiar to modern times.

From labour; and the lover, who has chid
Its long delay, feels every welcome stroke
Upon his heartstrings, trembling with delight—
To fly for refuge from distracting thought
To such amusements as ingenious woe
Contrives, hard shifting, and without her tools—
To read engraven on the mouldy walls,
In staggering types, his predecessor's tale,
A sad memorial, and subjoin his own—
To turn purveyor to an overgorged
And bloated spider, till the pampered pest
Is made familiar, watches his approach,
Comes at his call, and serves him for a friend—
To wear out time in numbering to and fro
The studs that thick emboss his iron door :
Then downward and then upward, then aslant,
And then alternate ; with a sickly hope
By dint of change to give his tasteless task
Some relish ; till the sum, exactly found
In all directions, he begins again—
Oh, comfortless existence ! hemmed around
With woes, which who that suffers would not kneel
And beg for exile, or the pangs of death ?
That man should thus encroach on fellow-man,
Abridge him of his just and native rights,
Eradicate him, tear him from his hold
Upon the endearments of domestic life
And social, nip his fruitfulness and use,
And doom him for perhaps a heedless word
To barrenness, and solitude, and tears,
Moves indignation, makes the name of king
(Of king whom such prerogative can please)
As dreadful as the Manichean god,
Adored through fear, strong only to destroy.
'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume ;
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,

Is evil ; hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progress in the road of science ; blinds
The eyesight of discovery ; and begets,
In those that suffer it, a sordid mind,
Bestial, a meagre intellect, unfit
To be the tenant of man's noble form.
Thee therefore still, blameworthy as thou art,
With all thy loss of empire, and though squeezed
By public exigence, till annual food
Fails for the craving hunger of the state,
Thee I account still happy, and the chief
Among the nations, seeing thou art free—
My native nook of earth ! Thy clime is rude,
Replete with vapours, and disposes much
All hearts to sadness, and none more than mine :
Thine unadulterate manners are less soft
And plausible than social life requires,
And thou hast need of discipline and art
To give thee what politer France receives
From nature's bounty—that humane address
And sweetness, without which no pleasure is
In converse, either starved by cold reserve,
Or flushed with fierce dispute, a senseless brawl.
Yet being free I love thee : for the sake
Of that one feature can be well content,
Disgraced as thou hast been, poor as thou art,
To seek no sublunary rest beside.
But once enslaved, farewell ! I could endure
Chains nowhere patiently ; and chains at home,
Where I am free by birthright, not at all.
Then what were left of roughness in the grain
Of British natures, wanting its excuse
That it belongs to freemen, would disgust
And shock me. I should then with double pain
Feel all the rigour of thy fickle clime ;
And, if I must bewail the blessing lost,
For which our Hampdens and our Sidneys bled,
I would at least bewail it under skies

Milder, among a people less austere ;
In scenes which, having never known me free,
Would not reproach me with the loss I felt.
Do I forebode impossible events,
And tremble at vain dreams? Heaven grant I may!
But the age of virtuous politics is past,
And we are deep in that of cold pretence.
Patriots are grown too shrewd to be sincere,
And we too wise to trust them. He that takes
Deep in his soft credulity the stamp
Designed by loud declaimers on the part
Of liberty, themselves the slaves of lust,
Incurs derision for his easy faith
And lack of knowledge, and with cause enough:
For when was public virtue to be found
Where private was not? Can he love the whole
Who loves no part? He be a nation's friend
Who is, in truth, the friend of no man there!
Can he be strenuous in his country's cause
Who slights the charities for whose dear sake
That country, if at all, must be beloved!
'Tis therefore sober and good men are sad
For England's glory, seeing it wax pale
And sickly, while her champions wear their hearts
So loose to private duty, that no brain,
Healthful and undisturbed by factious fumes,
Can dream them trusty to the general weal.
Such were not they of old, whose tempered blades
Dispersed the shackles of usurped control,
And hewed them link from link; then Albion's sons
Were sons indeed; they felt a filial heart
Beat high within them at a mother's wrongs;
And, shining each in his domestic sphere,
Shone brighter still, once called to public view.
'Tis therefore many, whose sequestered lot
Forbids their interference, looking on,
Anticipate perforce some dire event;
And, seeing the old castle of the state,

That promised once more firmness, so assailed
That all its tempest-beaten turrets shake,
Stand motionless expectants of its fall.
All has its date below ; the fatal hour
Was registered in heaven ere time began.
We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
Die too : the deep foundations that we lay,
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock :
A distant age asks where the fabric stood ;
And in the dust, sifted and searched in vain,
The undiscoverable secret sleeps.

But there is yet a liberty, unsung
By poets, and by senators unpraised,
Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the powers
Of earth and hell confederate take away :
A liberty which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons, have no power to bind ;
Which whoso tastes can be enslaved no more.
'Tis liberty of heart, derived from Heaven,
Bought with His blood who gave it to mankind,
And sealed with the same token. It is held
By charter, and that charter sanctioned sure
By the unimpeachable and awful oath
And promise of a God. His other gifts
All bear the royal stamp that speaks them his,
And are august ; but this transcends them all.
His other works, the visible display
Of all-creating energy and might,
Are grand, no doubt, and worthy of the word
That, finding an interminable space
Unoccupied, has filled the void so well,
And made so sparkling what was dark before.
But these are not his glory. Man, 'tis true,
Smit with the beauty of so fair a scene,
Might well suppose the Artificer divine
Meant it eternal, had he not himself
Pronounced it transient, glorious as it is,

And, still designing a more glorious far,
Doomed it as insufficient for his praise.
These, therefore, are occasional, and pass ;
Formed for the confutation of the fool,
Whose lying heart disputes against a God ;
That office served, they must be swept away.
Not so the labours of His love : they shine
In other heavens than these that we behold,
And fade not. There is Paradise that fears
No forfeiture, and of its fruits he sends
Large prelibation oft to saints below.
Of these, the first in order, and the pledge
And confident assurance of the rest,
Is liberty : a flight into his arms,
Ere yet mortality's fine threads give way :
A clear escape from tyrannizing lust,
And full immunity from penal woe.

Chains are the portion of revolted man,
Stripes, and a dungeon ; and his body serves
The triple purpose. In that sickly, foul,
Opprobrious residence he finds them all.
Propense his heart to idols, he is held
In silly dotage on created things,
Careless of their Creator. And that low
And sordid gravitation of his powers
To a vile clod so draws him, with such force
Resistless from the centre he should seek,
That he at last forgets it. All his hopes
Tend downward ; his ambition is to sink,
To reach a depth profounder still, and still
Profounder, in the fathomless abyss
Of folly, plunging in pursuit of death.
But, ere he gain the comfortless repose
He seeks, and acquiescence of his soul,
In heaven-renouncing exile, he endures—
What does he not, from lusts opposed in vain,
And self-reproaching conscience ! He foresees
The fatal issue to his health, fame, peace,

Fortune, and dignity ; the loss of all
That can ennoble man, and make frail life,
Short as it is, supportable. Still worse,
Far worse than all the plagues, with which his sins
Infect his happiest moments, he forebodes
Ages of hopeless misery. Future death,
And death still future. Not a hasty stroke,
Like that which sends him to the dusty grave ;
But unrepealable enduring death.
Scripture is still a trumpet to his fears :
What none can prove a forgery may be true ;
What none but bad men wish exploded must.
That scruple checks him. Riot is not loud
Nor drunk enough to drown it. In the midst
Of laughter his compunctions are sincere ;
And he abhors the jest by which he shines.
Remorse begets reform. His master-lust
Falls first before his resolute rebuke,
And seems dethroned and vanquished. Peace ensues,
But spurious and short-lived ; the puny child
Of self-congratulating pride, begot
On fancied innocence. Again he falls,
And fights again ; but finds his best essay
A presage ominous, portending still
Its own dishonour by a worse relapse.
Till nature, unavailing nature, foiled
So oft, and wearied in the vain attempt,
Scoffs at her own performance. Reason now
Takes part with appetite, and pleads the cause
Perversely, which of late she so condemned ;
With shallow shifts and old devices, worn
And tattered in the service of debauch,
Covering his shame from his offended sight.
“Hath God indeed given appetites to man,
And stored the earth so plenteously with means
To gratify the hunger of his wish ;
And doth he reprobate, and will he damn
The use of his own bounty ! making first

So frail a kind, and then enacting laws
So strict, that less than perfect must despair !
Falsehood ! which whoso but suspects of truth,
Dishonours God, and makes a slave of man.
Do they themselves, who undertake for hire
The teacher's office, and dispense at large
Their weekly dole of edifying strains,
Attend to their own music ! have they faith
In what, with such solemnity of tone
And gesture, they propound to our belief !
Nay—conduct hath the loudest tongue. The voice
Is but an instrument, on which the priest
May play what tune he pleases. In the deed,
The unequivocal, authentic deed,
We find sound argument, we read the heart."

Such reasonings (if that name must needs belong
To excuses in which reason has no part)
Serve to compose a spirit well-inclined
To live on terms of amity with vice,
And sin without disturbance. Often urged
(As often as libidinous discourse
Exhausted, he resorts to solemn themes
Of theological and grave import),
They gain at last his unreserved assent ;
Till, hardened his heart's temper in the forge
Of lust, and on the anvil of despair,
He slights the strokes of conscience. Nothing moves,
Or nothing much, his constancy in ill ;
Vain tampering has but fostered his disease :
'Tis desperate, and he sleeps the sleep of death.
Haste now, philosopher, and set him free.
Charm the deaf serpent wisely. Make him hear
Of rectitude and fitness, moral truth
How lovely, and the moral sense how sure,
Consulted and obeyed, to guide his steps
Directly to the First and Only Fair.
Spare not in such a cause. Spend all the powers
Of rant and rhapsody in virtue's praise :

Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand,
And with poetic trappings grace thy prose,
Till it outmantle all the pride of verse.
Ah, tinkling cymbal, and high-sounding brass,
Smitten in vain! such music cannot charm
The eclipse that intercepts truth's heavenly beam,
And chills and darkens a wide wand'ring soul.
The still small voice is wanted. He must speak,
Whose word leaps forth at once to its effect;
Who calls for things that are not, and they come.

Grace makes the slave a freeman. 'Tis a change
That turns to ridicule the turgid speech
And stately tone of moralists, who boast,
As if, like him of fabulous renown,
They had, indeed, ability to smoothe
The shag of savage nature, and were each
An Orpheus, and omnipotent in song;
But transformation of apostate man
From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,
Is work for Him that made him. He alone,
And he by means in philosophic eyes
Trivial and worthy of disdain, achieves
The wonder; humanising what is brute
In the lost kind, extracting from the lips
Of asps their venom, overpowering strength
By weakness, and hostility by love.

Patriots have toiled, and in their country's cause
Bled nobly; and their deeds, as they deserve,
Receive proud recompense. We give in charge
Their names to the sweet lyre. The historic muse,
Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
To latest times; and sculpture in her turn,
Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass
To guard them, and to immortalize her trust:
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
To those who, posted at the shrine of truth,
Have fallen in her defence. A patriot's blood,
Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed,

And for a time ensure, to his loved land
The sweets of liberty and equal laws ;
But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,
And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed
In confirmation of the noblest claim—
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free,
To soar, and to anticipate the skies.
Yet few remember them. They lived unknown
Till persecution dragged them into fame,
And chased them up to heaven. Their ashes flew—
No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song ;
And history, so warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this. She execrates, indeed,
The tyranny that doomed them to the fire,
But gives the glorious sufferers little praise.*
He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes, confederate for his harm,
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and, though poor perhaps compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And, smiling, say—"My Father made them all!"
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love

* See Hume

That planned, and built, and still upholds a world
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man !
Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot ; but ye will not find,
In feast, or in the chase, in song or dance,
A liberty like his who, unimpeached
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,
And has a richer use of yours than you.
He is indeed a freeman. Free by birth
Of no mean city—planned or ere the hills
Were built, the fountains opened, or the sea
With all his roaring multitude of waves.
His freedom is the same in every state ;
And no condition of this changeful life,
So manifold in cares, whose every day
Brings its own evil with it, makes it less :
For he has wings that neither sickness, pain,
Nor penury, can cripple or confine :
No nook so narrow but he spreads them there
With ease, and is at large. The oppressor holds
His body bound ; but knows not what a range
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain ;
And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells.

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before :
Thine eye shall be instructed ; and thine heart
Made pure shall relish, with divine delight,
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.
Brutes graze the mountain-top, with faces prone,
And eyes intent upon the scanty herb
It yields them ; or, recumbent on its brow,
Ruminate heedless of the scene outspread
Beneath, beyond, and stretching far away
From inland regions to the distant main.

Man views it, and admires ; but rests content
With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
But not its Author. Unconcerned who formed
The paradise he sees, he finds it such,
And, such well pleased to find it, asks no more.
Not so the mind that has been touched from Heaven,
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught
To read his wonders, in whose thought the world,
Fair as it is, existed ere it was.
Not for its own sake merely, but for His
Much more who fashioned it, he gives it praise,
Praise that, from earth resulting, as it ought,
To earth's acknowledged Sovereign, finds at once
Its only just proprietor in Him.
The soul that sees him or receives sublimed
New faculties, or learns at least to employ
More worthily the powers she owned before ;
Discerns in all things what, with stupid gaze
Of ignorance, till then she overlooked,
A ray of heavenly light, gilding all forms
Terrestrial in the vast and the minute—
(The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.
Much conversant with heaven, she often holds
With those fair ministers of light to man,
That fill the skies nightly with silent pomp,
Sweet conference. Inquires what strains were they
With which heaven rang, when every star, in haste
To gratulate the new-created earth,
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God
Shouted for joy.—“Tell me, ye shining hosts,
That navigate a sea that knows no storms,
Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,
If from your elevation, whence ye view
Distinctly scenes invisible to man,
And systems, of whose birth no tidings yet
Have reached this nether world, ye spy a race

Favoured as ours—transgressors from the womb,
And hasting to a grave, yet doomed to rise,
And to possess a brighter heaven than yours!
As one who, long detained on foreign shores,
Pants to return, and when he sees afar
His country's weather-bleached and battered rocks,
From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
Radiant with joy towards the happy land ;
So I with animated hopes behold,
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,
Ordained to guide the embodied spirit home
From toilsome life to never-ending rest.
Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires
That give assurance of their own success,
And that, infused from heaven, must thither tend."

So reads he nature, whom the lamp of truth
Illuminates. Thy lamp, mysterious Word!
Which whoso sees no longer wanders lost,
With intellect bemazed in endless doubt,
But runs the road of wisdom. Thou hast built,
With means that were not till by thee employed,
Worlds that had never been hadst thou in strength
Been less, or less benevolent than strong.
They are thy witnesses, who speak thy power
And goodness infinite, but speak in ears
That hear not, or receive not their report.
In vain thy creatures testify of thee,
Till thou proclaim thyself. Theirs is indeed
A teaching voice ; but 'tis the praise of thine,
That whom it teaches it makes prompt to learn,
And with the boon gives talents for its use.
Till thou art heard, imaginations vain
Possess the heart, and fables false as hell ;
Yet, deemed oracular, lure down to death
The uninformed and heedless souls of men.
We give to chance, blind chance, ourselves as blind,
The glory of thy work ; which yet appears
Perfect and unimpeachable of blame,

Challenging human scrutiny, and proved
Then skilful most when most severely judged.
But chance is not ; or is not where thou reign'st :
Thy providence forbids that fickle power
(If power she be that works but to confound)
To mix her wild vagaries with thy laws.
Yet thus we dote, refusing while we can
Instruction, and inventing to ourselves
Gods such as guilt makes welcome ; gods that sleep,
Or disregard our follies, or that sit
Amused spectators of this bustling stage.
Thee we reject, unable to abide
Thy purity, till pure as thou art pure,
Made such by thee, we love thee for that cause
For which we shunned and hated thee before.
Then we are free. Then liberty, like day,
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from heaven
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.
A voice is heard that mortal ears hear not
Till thou hast touched them ; 'tis the voice of song,
A loud hosanna sent from all thy works ;
Which he that hears it with a shout repeats,
And adds his rapture to the general praise.
In that blest moment, nature, throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
The Author of her beauties, who, retired
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his power denied.
Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, eternal Word !
From thee departing they are lost, and rove
At random without honour, hope, or peace.
From thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavour, and his glad success,
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.
But, O thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown !
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor ;
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.



THE TASK.—BOOK VI.

THE WINTER WALK AT NOON.

ARGUMENT.

Bells at a distance. Their effect. A fine noon in winter. A sheltered walk. Meditation better than books. Our familiarity with the course of nature makes it appear less wonderful than it is. The transformation that spring effects in a shrubbery described. A mistake concerning the course of nature corrected. God maintains it by an unremitted act. The amusements fashionable at this hour of the day reproved. Animals happy, a delightful sight. Origin of cruelty to animals. That it is a great crime, proved from Scripture. That proof illustrated by a tale. A line drawn between the lawful and unlawful destruction of them. Their good and useful properties insisted on. Apology for the encomiums bestowed by the author on animals. Instances of man's extravagant praise of man. The groans of the creation shall have an end. A view taken of the restoration of all things. An invocation and an invitation of Him who shall bring it to pass. The retired man vindicated from the charge of uselessness. Conclusion.

THERE is in souls a sympathy with sounds ;
And as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased
With melting airs, or martial, brisk, or grave :
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.
How soft the music of those village bells,
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet, now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on !

With easy force it opens all the cells
Where memory slept. Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
And with it all its pleasures and its pains.
Such comprehensive views the spirit takes,
That in a few short moments I retrace
(As in a map the voyager his course)
The windings of my way through many years.
Short as in retrospect the journey seems,
It seemed not always short; the rugged path,
And prospect oft so dreary and forlorn,
Moved many a sigh at its disheartening length.
Yet feeling present evils, while the past
Faintly impress the mind, or not at all,
How readily we wish time spent revoked,
That we might try the ground again, where once
(Through inexperience, as we now perceive)
We missed that happiness we might have found!
Some friend is gone, perhaps his son's best friend,
A father, whose authority, in show
When most severe, and mustering all its force,
Was but the graver countenance of love:
Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, might lower,
And utter now and then an awful voice,
But had a blessing in its darkest frown,
Threatening at once and nourishing the plant.
We loved, but not enough, the gentle hand
That reared us. At a thoughtless age, allured
By every gilded folly, we renounced
His sheltering side, and wilfully forewent
That converse, which we now in vain regret.
How gladly would the man recall to life
The boy's neglected sire! a mother too,
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
Might he demand them at the gates of death.
Sorrow has, since they went, subdued and tamed
The playful humour; he could now endure
(Himself grown sober in the vale of tears),

And feel a parent's presence no restraint.
But not to understand a treasure's worth
Till time has stolen away the slighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is.
The few that pray at all pray oft amiss,
And seeking grace to improve the prize they hold,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

The night was winter in his roughest mood ;
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon,
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale ;
And through the trees I view the embattled tower
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though moveable through all its length
As the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,
And, intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half-suppressed :
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice
That tinkle in the withered leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head,

And learning wiser grow without his books.
Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have oftentimes no connection. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men ;
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
Till smoothed, and squared, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much ;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.
Books are not seldom talismans and spells,
By which the magic art of shrewder wits
Holds an unthinking multitude enthralled.
Some to the fascination of a name
Surrender judgment hoodwinked. Some the style
Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds
Of error leads them, by a tune entranced.
While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear
The insupportable fatigue of thought,
And swallowing therefore without pause or choice
The total grist unsifted, husks and all.
But trees, and rivulets whose rapid course
Defies the check of winter, haunts of deer,
And sheepwalks populous with bleating lambs,
And lanes, in which the primrose ere her time
Peeps through the moss that clothes the hawthorn root,
Deceive no student. Wisdom there, and truth,
Not shy, as in the world, and to be won
By slow solicitation, seize at once
The roving thought, and fix it on themselves.
What prodigies can power divine perform
More grand than it produces year by year,
And all in sight of inattentive man ?
Familiar with the effect, we slight the cause,
And, in the constancy of nature's course,
The regular return of genial months,
And renovation of a faded world,

See nought to wonder at. Should God again,
As once in Gibeon, interrupt the race
Of the undeviating and punctual sun,
How would the world admire; but speaks it less
An agency divine, to make him know
His moment when to sink and when to rise,
Age after age, than to arrest his course?
All we behold is miracle; but, seen
So duly, all is miracle in vain.
Where now the vital energy that moved,
While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
Through the imperceptible meandering veins
Of leaf and flower? It sleeps; and the icy touch
Of unprolific winter has impressed
A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.
But let the months go round, a few short months,
And all shall be restored. These naked shoots,
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
Shall boast new charms, and more than they have lost
Then each, in its peculiar honours clad,
Shall publish, even to the distant eye,
Its family and tribe. Laburnum, rich
In streaming gold; syringa, ivory pure;
The scentless and the scented rose; this red,
And of an humbler growth, the other* tall,
And throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighbouring cypress, or more sable yew,
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
That the wind severs from the broken wave;
The lilac, various in array, now white,
Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set
With purple spikes pyramidal, as if
Studious of ornament, yet unresolved

* The Guelder Rose,

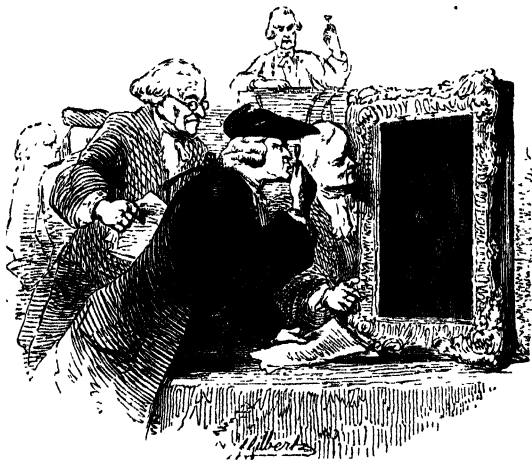
Which hue she most approved, she chose them all ;
Copious of flowers the woodbine, pale and wan,
But well compensating her sickly looks
With never cloying odours, early and late ;
Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm
Of flowers, like flies clothing her slender rods,
That scarce a leaf appears ; mezereon too,
Though leafless, well attired, and thick beset
With blushing wreaths, investing every spray ;
Althæa with the purple eye ; the broom,
Yellow and bright, as bullion unalloyed,
Her blossoms ; and luxuriant above all
The jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets,
The deep dark green of whose unvarnished leaf
Makes more conspicuous, and illumines more
The bright profusion of her scattered stars.
These have been, and these shall be in their day ;
And all this uniform uncoloured scene
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,
And flush into variety again.
From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,
Is nature's progress, when she lectures man
In heavenly truth ; evincing, as she makes
The grand transition, that there lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
The beauties of the wilderness are his,
That makes so gay the solitary place,
Where no eye sees them ; and the fairer forms,
That cultivation glories in, are his.
He sets the bright procession on its way,
And marshals all the order of the year ;
He marks the bounds which winter may not pass,
And blunts his pointed fury ; in its case,
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ,
Uninjured, with inimitable art ;
And, ere one flowery season fades and dies,
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.
Some say that in the origin of things,

When all creation started into birth,
The infant elements received a law,
From which they swerve not since ; that under force
Of that controlling ordinance they move,
And need not his immediate hand, who first
Prescribed their course, to regulate it now.
Thus dream they, and contrive to save a God
The incumbrance of his own concerns, and spare
The great Artificer of all that moves
The stress of a continual act, the pain
Of unremitted vigilance and care,
As too laborious and severe a task.
So man, the moth, is not afraid, it seems,
To span omnipotence, and measure might,
That knows no measure, by the scanty rule
And standard of his own, that is to-day,
And is not ere to-morrow's sun go down.
But how should matter occupy a charge,
Dull as it is, and satisfy a law
So vast in its demands, unless impelled
To ceaseless service by a ceaseless force,
And under pressure of some conscious cause ?
The Lord of all, himself through all diffused,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.
Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God. He feeds the secret fire
By which the mighty process is maintained,
Who sleeps not, is not weary ; in whose sight
Slow circling ages are as transient days ;
Whose work is without labour ; whose designs
No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts ;
And whose beneficence no charge exhausts.
Him blind antiquity profaned, not served,
With self-taught rites, and under various names,
Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,
And Flora, and Vertumnus ; peopling earth
With tutelary goddesses and gods
That were not ; and commending as they would

To each some province, garden, field, or grove.
But all are under one. One spirit—His
Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows—
Rules universal nature. Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of his unrivalled pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the seaside sands,
The forms with which he sprinkles all the earth.
Happy who walks with him! whom what he finds
Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,
Or what he views of beautiful or grand
In nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a present God.
His presence, who made all so fair, perceived,
Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene
Is dreary, so with him all seasons please.
Though winter had been none, had man been true,
And earth be punished for its tenant's sake,
Yet not in vengeance; as this smiling sky,
So soon succeeding such an angry night,
And these dissolving snows, and this clear stream
Recovering fast its liquid music, prove.

Who, then, that has a mind well strung and tuned
To contemplation, and within his reach
A scene so friendly to his favourite task,
Would waste attention at the chequered board,
His host of wooden warriors to and fro
Marching and countermarching, with an eye
As fixed as marble, with a forehead ridged
And furrowed into storms, and with a hand
Trembling, as if eternity were hung
In balance on his conduct of a pin?
Nor envies he aught more their idle sport,
Who pant with application misapplied
To trivial toys, and, pushing ivory balls

Across a velvet level, feel a joy
 Akin to rapture, when the bauble finds
 Its destined goal of difficult access.
 Nor deems he wiser him, who gives his noon
 To Miss, the mercer's plague, from shop to shop
 Wandering, and littering with unfolded silks
 The polished counter, and approving none,
 Or promising with smiles to call again.
 Nor him who, by his vanity seduced,
 And soothed into a dream that he discerns
 The difference of a Guido from a daub,



Frequents the crowded auction : stationed there
 As duly as the Langford of the show,
 With glass at eye, and catalogue in hand,
 And tongue accomplished in the fulsome cant
 And pedantry that coxcombs learn with ease :
 Oft as the price-deciding hammer falls,
 He notes it in his book, then raps his box,

Swears 'tis a bargain, rails at his hard fate
That he has let it pass—but never bids.



Here unmolested, through whatever sign
The sun proceeds, I wander. Neither mist,
Nor freezing sky nor sultry, checking me,
Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy.
E'en in the spring and playtime of the year,
That calls the unwonted villager abroad
With all her little ones, a sportive train,
To gather kingcups in the yellow mead,
And prink their hair with daisies, or to pick
A cheap but wholesome salad from the brook;

These shades are all my own. The timorous hare,
Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,
Scarce shuns me; and the stockdove, unalarmed,
Sits cooing in the pine-tree, nor suspends
His long love-ditty for my near approach.
Drawn from his refuge in some lonely elm
That age or injury has hollowed deep,
Where, on his bed of wool and matted leaves,
He has outslept the winter, ventures forth
To frisk awhile, and bask in the warm sun.
The squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play,
He sees me, and at once, swift as a bird,
Ascends the neighbouring beech; there whisks his brush,
And perks his ears, and stamps, and cries aloud,
With all the prettiness of feigned alarm,
And anger insignificantly fierce.

The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both, that is not pleased
With sight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happiness augment his own.
The bounding fawn, that darts across the glade
When none pursues, through mere delight of heart,
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee;
The horse as wanton, and almost as fleet,
That skims the spacious meadow at full speed,
Then stops and snorts, and, throwing high his heels,
Starts to the voluntary race again;
The very kine that gambol at high noon,
The total herd receiving first from one
That leads the dance a summons to be gay,
Though wild their strange vagaries, and uncouth
Their efforts, yet resolved with one consent
To give such act and utterance as they may
To ecstasy too big to be suppressed—
These and a thousand images of bliss,
With which kind nature graces every scene,

Where cruel man defeats not her design,
Impart to the benevolent, who wish
All that are capable of pleasure pleased,
A far superior happiness to theirs,
The comfort of a reasonable joy.

Man scarce had risen, obedient to His call,
Who formed him from the dust, his future grave,
When he was crowned as never king was since.
God set the diadem upon his head,
And angel choirs attended. Wondering stood
The new-made monarch, while before him passed,
All happy, and all perfect in their kind,
The creatures, summoned from their various haunts
To see their sovereign, and confess his sway.
Vast was his empire, absolute his power,
Or bounded only by a law whose force
'Twas his sublimest privilege to feel
And own—the law of universal love.
He ruled with meekness, they obeyed with joy;
No cruel purpose lurked within his heart,
And no distrust of his intent in theirs.

So Eden was a scene of harmless sport,
Where kindness on his part who ruled the whole
Begot a tranquil confidence in all,
And fear as yet was not, nor cause for fear.
But sin marred all; and the revolt of man,
That source of evils not exhausted yet,
Was punished with revolt of his from him.
Garden of God, how terrible the change
Thy groves and lawns then witnessed! Every heart,
Each animal of every name, conceived
A jealousy and an instinctive fear,
And, conscious of some danger, either fled
Precipitate the loathed abode of man,
Or growled defiance in such angry sort,
As taught him, too, to tremble in his turn.
Thus harmony and family accord
Were driven from Paradise; and in that hour

The seeds of cruelty, that since have swelled
To such gigantic and enormous growth,
Were sown in human nature's fruitful soil.
Hence date the persecution and the pain
That man inflicts on all inferior kinds,
Regardless of their plaints. To make him sport,
To gratify the frenzy of his wrath,
Or his base gluttony, are causes good
And just in his account, why bird and beast
Should suffer torture, and the streams be dyed
With blood of their inhabitants impaled.
Earth groans beneath the burden of a war
Waged with defenceless innocence, while he,
Not satisfied to prey on all around,
Adds tenfold bitterness to death by pangs
Needless, and first torments ere he devours.
Now happiest they that occupy the scenes
The most remote from his abhorred resort,
Whom once, as delegate of God on earth,
They feared, and as his perfect image loved.
The wilderness is theirs, with all its caves,
Its hollow glens, its thickets, and its plains,
Unvisited by man. There they are free,
And howl and roar as likes them, uncontrolled ;
Nor ask his leave to slumber or to play.
Woe to the tyrant, if he dare intrude
Within the confines of their wild domain :
The lion tells him—I am monarch here !
And, if he spare him, spares him on the terms
Of royal mercy, and through generous scorn
To rend a victim trembling at his foot.
In measure, as by force of instinct drawn,
Or by necessity constrained, they live
Dependent upon man ; those in his fields,
These at his crib, and some beneath his roof.
They prove too often at how dear a rate
He sells protection. Witness at his foot
The spaniel dying for some venial fault,

Under dissection of the knotted scourge ;
Witness the patient ox, with stripes and yells
Driven to the slaughter, goaded, as he runs,
To madness ; while the savage at his heels
Laughs at the frantic sufferer's fury, spent
Upon the guiltless passenger o'erthrown.
He too is witness, noblest of the train
That wait on man, the flight-performing horse ;
With unsuspecting readiness he takes
His murderer on his back, and, pushed all day,
With bleeding sides and flanks that heave for life,
To the far distant goal arrives, and dies.
So little mercy shows who needs so much !
Does law, so jealous in the cause of man,
Denounce no doom on the delinquent ? None.
He lives, and o'er his brimming beaker boasts
(As if barbarity were high desert)
The inglorious feat, and clamorous in praise
Of the poor brute, seems wisely to suppose
The honours of his matchless horse his own.
But many a crime deemed innocent on earth
Is registered in heaven ; and these no doubt
Have each their record, with a curse annexed.
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,
But God will never. When he charged the Jew
To assist his foe's down-fallen beast to rise ;
And when the bush-exploring boy, that seized
The young, to let the parent bird go free ;
Proved he not plainly that his meaner works
Are yet his care, and have an interest all,
All in the universal Father's love ?
On Noah, and in him on all mankind,
The charter was conferred by which we hold
The flesh of animals in fee, and claim
O'er all we feed on power of life and death.
But read the instrument and mark it well :
The oppression of a tyrannous control
Can find no warrant there. Feed then, and yield

Thanks for thy food. Carnivorous, through sin,
Feed on the slain, but spare the living brute!

The Governor of all, himself to all
So bountiful, in whose attentive ear
The unfledged raven and the lion's whelp
Plead not in vain for pity on the pangs
Of hunger unassuaged, has interposed
Not seldom, his avenging arm, to smite
The injurious trampler upon nature's law,
That claims forbearance even for a brute.
He hates the hardness of a Balaam's heart ;
And, prophet as he was, he might not strike
The blameless animal, without rebuke,
On which he rode. Her opportune offence
Saved him, or the unrelenting seer had died.
He sees that human equity is slack
To interfere, though in so just a cause ;
And makes the task his own. Inspiring dumb
And helpless victims with a sense so keen
Of injury, with such knowledge of their strength,
And such sagacity to take revenge,
That oft the beast has seemed to judge the man—
An ancient, not a legendary tale, :
By one of sound intelligence rehearsed
(If such who plead for Providence may seem
In modern eyes), shall make the doctrine clear.

Where England, stretched towards the setting sun,
Narrow and long, o'erlooks the western wave,
Dwelt young Misagathus ; a scorner he
Of God and goodness, atheist in ostent,
Vicious in act, in temper savage, fierce.
He journeyed ; and his chance was, as he went,
To join a traveller, of far different note—
Evander, famed for piety, for years
Deserving honour, but for wisdom more.
Fame had not left the venerable man
A stranger to the manners of the youth,
Whose face, too, was familiar to his view.

Their way was on the margin of the land,
O'er the green summit of the rocks, whose base
Beats back the roaring surge, scarce heard so high.
The charity that warmed his heart was moved
At sight of the man-monster. With a smile
Gentle, and affable, and full of grace,
As fearful of offending whom he wished
Much to persuade, he plied his ear with truths
Not harshly thundered forth, or rudely pressed,
But, like his purpose, gracious, kind, and sweet.
"And dost thou dream," the impenetrable man
Exclaimed, "that me the lullabies of age,
And fantasies of dotards such as thou,
Can cheat, or move a moment's fear in me?
Mark now the proof I give thee, that the brave
Need no such aids as superstition lends,
To steel their hearts against the dread of death."
He spoke, and to the precipice at hand
Pushed with a madman's fury. Fancy shrinks,
And the blood thrills and curdles at the thought
Of such a gulf as he designed his grave.
But though the felon on his back could dare
The dreadful leap, more rational, his steed
Declined the death, and wheeling swiftly round,
Or e'er his hoof had pressed the crumbling verge,
Baffled his rider, saved against his will.
The frenzy of the brain may be redressed
By medicine well applied, but without grace
The heart's insanity admits no cure.
Enraged the more by what might have reformed
His horrible intent, again he sought
Destruction, with a zeal to be destroyed,
With sounding whip, and rowels dyed in blood.
But still in vain. The Providence that meant
A longer date to the far nobler beast,
Spared yet again the ignobler for his sake.
And now, his prowess proved, and his sincere
Incurable obduracy evinced,

His rage grew cool ; and pleased perhaps to have earned
 So cheaply the renown of that attempt,
 With looks of some complacence he resumed.
 His road, deriding much the blank amaze
 Of good Evander, still where he was left
 Fixed motionless, and petrified with dread.
 So on they fared. Discourse on other themes
 Ensuing, seemed to obliterate the past ;
 And tamer far for so much fury shown
 (As is the course of rash and fiery men),
 The rude companion smiled, as if transformed.
 But 'twas a transient calm. A storm was near,
 An unsuspected storm. His hour was come.
 The impious challenger of power divine
 Was now to learn that Heaven, though slow to wrath,
 Is never with impunity defied.

His horse, as he had caught his master's mood,
 Snorting, and starting into sudden rage,
 Unbidden, and not now to be controlled,
 Rushed to the cliff, and, having reached it, stood.
 At once the shock unseated him : he flew
 Sheer o'er the craggy barrier ; and, immersed
 Deep in the flood, found, when he sought it not,
 The death he had deserved, and died alone.
 So God wrought double justice ; made the fool
 The victim of his own tremendous choice,
 And taught a brute the way to safe revenge.

I would not enter on my list of friends
 (Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
 Yet wanting sensibility) the man
 Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
 An inadvertent step may crush the snail
 That crawls at evening in the public path ;
 But he that has humanity, forewarned,
 Will tread aside, and let the reptile live.
 The creeping vermin, loathsome to the sight,
 And charged perhaps with venom, that intrudes,
 Visiter unwelcome, into scenes

Sacred to neatness and repose—the alcove,
The chamber, or refectory—may die :
A necessary act incurs no blame ;
Not so when, held within their proper bounds,
And guiltless of offence, they range the air,
Or take their pastime in the spacious field :
There they are privileged ; and he that hunts
Or harms them there is guilty of a wrong—
Disturbs the economy of nature's realm,
Who, when she formed, designed them an abode.
The sum is this. If man's convenience, health,
Or safety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs.
Else they are all—the meanest things that are—
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who in his sovereign wisdom made them all.
Ye, therefore, who love mercy, teach your sons
To love it too. The springtime of our years
Is soon dishonoured and defiled in most
By budding ills, that ask a prudent hand
To check them. But, alas ! none sooner shoots,
If unrestrained, into luxuriant growth,
Than cruelty, most devilish of them all.
Mercy to him, that shows it, is the rule
And righteous limitation of its act,
By which Heaven moves in pardoning guilty man ;
And he that shows none being ripe in years,
And conscious of the outrage he commits,
Shall seek it, and not find it, in his turn.

Distinguished much by reason, and still more
By our capacity of grace divine,
From creatures that exist but for our sake,
Which, having served us, perish, we are held
Accountable ; and God, some future day,
Will reckon with us roundly for the abuse
Of what he deems no mean or trivial trust.
Superior as we are, they yet depend

Not more on human help than we on theirs.
 Their strength, or speed, or vigilance were given
 In aid of our defects. In some are found
 Such teachable and apprehensive parts,
 That man's attainments in his own concerns,
 Matched with the expertness of the brutes in theirs,
 Are oftentimes vanquished and thrown far behind.
 Some show that nice sagacity of smell,
 And read with such discernment, in the port
 And figure of the man, his secret aim,
 That oft we owe our safety to a skill
 We could not teach, and must despair to learn.
 But learn we might, if not too proud to stoop
 To quadruped instructors, many a good
 And useful quality, and virtue too,
 Rarely exemplified among ourselves.
 Attachment never to be weaned or changed
 By any change of fortune; proof alike
 Against unkindness, absence, and neglect;
 Fidelity, that neither bribe nor threat
 Can move or warp; and gratitude for small
 And trivial favours, lasting as the life,
 And glistening even in the dying eye.

Man praises man. Desert in arts or arms
 Wins public honour; and ten thousand sit
 Patiently present at a sacred song,
 Commemoration mad; content to hear
 (O wonderful effect of music's power!)
 Messiah's eulogy for Handel's sake.
 But less, methinks, than sacrilege might serve—
 (For was it less, what heathen would have dared
 To strip Jove's statue of his oaken wreath,
 And hang it up in honour of a man!)
 Much less might serve, when all that we design
 Is but to gratify an itching ear,
 And give the day to a musician's praise.
 Remember Handel! Who, that was not born
 Deaf as the dead to harmony, forgets,

Or can, the more than Homer of his age?
Yes—we remember him; and while we praise
A talent so divine, remember too
That His most holy book, from whom it came,
Was never meant, was never used before,
To buckram out the memory of a man.
But hush!—the muse perhaps is too severe;
And with a gravity beyond the size
And measure of the offence, rebukes a deed
Less impious than absurd, and owing more
To want of judgment than to wrong design.
So in the chapel of old Ely House,
When wandering Charles, who meant to be the third,
Had fled from William, and the news was fresh,
The simple clerk, but loyal, did announce,
And eke did rear right merrily, two staves
Sung to the praise and glory of King George!
Man praises man; and Garrick's memory next,
When time hath somewhat mellowed it, and made
The idol of our worship while he lived
The god of our idolatry once more,
Shall have its altar; and the world shall go
In pilgrimage to bow before his shrine.
The theatre, too small, shall suffocate
Its squeezed contents, and more than it admits
Shall sigh at their exclusion, and return
Ungratified: for there some noble lord
Shall stuff his shoulders with King Richard's bunch,
Or wrap himself in Hamlet's inky cloak,
And strut, and storm, and straddle, stamp, and stare,
To show the world how Garrick did not act—
For Garrick was a worshipper himself;
He drew the liturgy, and framed the rights
And solemn ceremonial of the day,
And called the world to worship on the banks
Of Avon, famed in song. Ah, pleasant proof
That piety has still in human hearts
Some place—a spark or two not yet extinct!

The mulberry-tree was hung with blooming wreaths ;
The mulberry-tree stood centre of the dance ;
The mulberry-tree was hymned with dulcet airs ;
And from his touchwood trunk the mulberry-tree
Supplied such relics as devotion holds
Still sacred, and preserves with pious care.
So 'twas a hallowed time : decorum reigned,
And mirth without offence. No few returned,
Doubtless, much edified, and all refreshed.—
Man praises man. The rabble, all alive,
From tippling benches, cellars, stalls, and styes,
Swarm in the streets. The statesman of the day,
A pompous and slow-moving pageant, comes.
Some shout him, and some hang upon his car,
To gaze in his eyes, and bless him. Maidens wave
Their kerchiefs, and old women weep for joy ;
While others, not so satisfied, unhorse
The gilded equipage, and, turning loose
His steeds, usurp a place they well deserve.
Why ? what has charmed them ? Hath he saved the state ?
No. Doth he purpose its salvation ? No.
Enchanting novelty, that moon at full,
That finds out every crevice of the head
That is not sound and perfect, hath in theirs
Wrought this disturbance. But the wane is near,
And his own cattle must suffice him soon.
Thus idly do we waste the breath of praise,
And dedicate a tribute, in its use
And just direction sacred, to a thing
Doomed to the dust, or lodged already there.
Encomium in old time was poet's work ;
But poets, having lavishly long since
Exhausted all materials of the art,
The task now falls into the public hand ;
And I, contented with an humble theme,
Have poured my stream of panegyric down
The vale of nature, where it creeps and winds
Among her lovely works with a secure

And unambitious course, reflecting clear,
If not the virtues, yet the worth of brutes.
And I am recompensed, and deem the toils
Of poetry not lost, if verse of mine
May stand between an animal and woe,
And teach one tyrant pity for his drudge.

The groans of nature in this nether world,
Which Heaven has heard for ages, have an end.
Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung,
Whose fire was kindled at the prophet's lamp,
The time of rest, the promised Sabbath, comes.
Six thousand years of sorrow have well-nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things
Is merely as the working of a sea
Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest:
For He, whose car the winds are, and the clouds
The dust that waits upon his sultry march,
When sin hath moved him, and his wrath is hot,
Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend
Propitious in his chariot paved with love:
And what his storms have blasted and defaced
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.

Sweet is the harp of prophecy; too sweet
Not to be wronged by a mere mortal touch:
Nor can the wonders it records be sung
To meaner music, and not suffer loss.
But when a poet, or when one like me,
Happy to rove among poetic flowers,
Though poor in skill to rear them, lights at last
On some fair theme, some theme divinely fair,
Such is the impulse and the spur he feels,
To give it praise proportioned to its worth,
That not to attempt it, arduous as he deems
The labour, were a task more arduous still.

O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplished bliss! which who can see,

Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy!
Rivers of gladness water all the earth,
And clothe all climes with beauty; the reproach
Of barrenness is past. The fruitful field
Laughs with abundance; and the land, once lean,
Or fertile only in its own disgrace,
Exults to see its thistly curse repealed.
The various seasons woven into one,
And that one season an eternal spring,
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence,
For there is none to covet, all are full.
The lion, and the libbard, and the bear,
Graze with the fearless flocks; all bask at noon
Together, or all gambol in the shade
Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.
Antipathies are none. No foe to man
Lurks in the serpent now: the mother sees,
And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand
Stretched forth to dally with the crested worm,
To stroke his azure neck, or to receive
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.
All creatures worship man, and all mankind
One Lord, one Father. Error has no place;
That creeping pestilence is driven away;
The breath of Heaven has chased it. In the heart
No passion touches a discordant string,
But all is harmony and love. Disease
Is not: the pure and uncontaminate blood
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.
One song employs all nations: and all cry,
"Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!"
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy;
Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.
Behold the measure of the promise filled;

See Salem built, the labour of a God !
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines ;
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light ; the glory of all lands
Flows into her ; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,
Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there ;*
The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
And Saba's spicy groves, pay tribute there.
Praise is in all her gates : upon her walls,
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
Kneels with the native of the farthest West ;
And Æthiopia spreads abroad the hand,
And worships. Her report has travelled forth
Into all lands. From every clime they come
To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,
O Sion ! an assembly such as earth
Saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see.

Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restored.
(So God has greatly purposed ; who would else
In his dishonoured works himself endure
Dishonour, and be wronged without redress.
Haste, then, and wheel away a shattered world,
Ye slow revolving seasons ! we would see
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
A world that does not dread and hate his laws,
And suffer for its crime ; would learn how fair
The creature is that God pronounces good,
How pleasant in itself what pleases him.
Here every drop of honey hides a sting ;
Worms wind themselves into our sweetest flowers ;
And e'en the joy that haply some poor heart

* Nebaioth and Kedar, the sons of Ishmael, and progenitors of the Arabs, in the prophetic Scripture here alluded to, may be reasonably considered as representatives of the Gentiles at large.

Derives from heaven, pure as the fountain is,
Is sullied in the stream, taking a taint
From touch of human lips, at best impure.
Oh for a world in principle as chaste
As this is gross and selfish ! over which
Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,
That govern all things here, shouldering aside
The meek and modest truth, and forcing her
To seek a refuge from the tongue of strife
In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men :
Where violence shall never lift the sword,
Nor cunning justify the proud man's wrong,
Leaving the poor no remedy but tears :
Where he that fills an office shall esteem
The occasion it presents of doing good
More than the perquisite : where law shall speak
Seldom, and never but as wisdom prompts
And equity ; not jealous more to guard
A worthless form, than to decide aright :
Where fashion shall not sanctify abuse,
Nor smooth good-breeding (supplemental grace)
With lean performance ape the work of love !

Come, then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy ! It was thine
By ancient covenant ere nature's birth ;
And thou hast made it thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value with thy blood.
Thy saints proclaim thee king ; and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen
Dipped in the fountain of eternal love.
Thy saints proclaim thee king ; and thy delay
Gives courage to their foes, who, could they see
The dawn of thy last advent, long desired,
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
And flee for safety to the falling rocks.
The very spirit of the world is tired
Of its own taunting question, asked so long,

Where is the promise of your Lord's approach?"
The infidel has shot his bolts away,
Till, his exhausted quiver yielding none,
He gleans the blunted shafts that have recoiled,
And aims them at the shield of truth again.
The veil is rent, rent too by priestly hands,
That hides divinity from mortal eyes;
And all the mysteries to faith proposed,
Insulted and traduced, are cast aside,
As useless, to the moles and to the bats.
They now are deemed the faithful, and are praised,
Who, constant only in rejecting thee,
Deny thy Godhead with a martyr's zeal,
And quit their office for their error's sake.
Blind, and in love with darkness! yet e'en these
Worthy, compared with sycophants, who kneel,
Thy name adoring, and then preach thee man!
So fares thy church. But how thy church may fare
The world takes little thought. Who will may preach,
And what they will. All pastors are alike
To wandering sheep, resolved to follow none.
(Two gods divide them all—pleasure and gain:
For these they live, they sacrifice to these,
And in their service wage perpetual war
With conscience and with thee. Lust in their hearts
And mischief in their hands, they roam the earth
To prey upon each other: stubborn, fierce,
High-minded, foaming out their own disgrace.
Thy prophets speak of such; and, noting down
The features of the last degenerate times,
Exhibit every lineament of these.
Come, then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of a world!
He is the happy man whose life e'en now
Shows somewhat of that happier-life to come;
Who, doomed to an obscure but tranquil state,

Is pleased with it, and, were he free to choose,
Would make his fate his choice; whom peace, the fruit
Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
Prepare for happiness; bespeak him one
Content indeed to sojourn while he must
Below the skies, but having there his home.
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search
Of objects, more illustrious in her view;
And, occupied as earnestly as she,
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world.
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not;
He seeks not hers, for he has proved them vain.
He cannot skim the ground like summer birds
Pursuing gilded flies; and such he deems
Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.
Therefore in contemplation is his bliss:
Whose power is such, that whom she lifts from earth
She makes familiar with a heaven unseen,
And shows him glories yet to be revealed.
Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed,
And censured oft as useless. Stillest streams
Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird
That flutters least is longest on the wing.
Ask him, indeed, what trophies he has raised,
Or what achievements of immortal fame
He purposes, and he shall answer—None.
His warfare is within. There unfatigued
His fervent spirit labours. There he fights,
And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,
And never-withering wreaths, compared with which
The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.
Perhaps the self-approving, haughty world,
That as she sweeps him with her whistling silks
Scarce deigns to notice him, or, if she see,
Deems him a cipher in the works of God,
Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,
Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes
Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring

And plenteous harvest, to the prayer he makes,
When, Isaac-like, the solitary saint
Walks forth to meditate at eventide,
And think on her, who thinks not for herself.
Forgive him, then, thou bustler in concerns
Of little worth, an idler in the best,
If, author of no mischief and some good,
He seek his proper happiness by means
That may advance, but cannot hinder, thine.
Nor, though he tread the secret path of life,
Engage no notice, and enjoy much ease,
Account him an encumbrance on the state,
Receiving benefits, and rendering none.
His sphere, though humble, if that humble sphere
Shine with his fair example, and though small
His influence, if that influence all be spent
In soothing sorrow and in quenching strife,
In aiding helpless indigence, in works
From which at least a grateful few derive
Some taste of comfort in a world of woe ;
Then let the supercilious great confess
He serves his country, recompenses well
The state, beneath the shadow of whose vine
He sits secure, and in the scale of life
Holds no ignoble, though a slighted, place.
The man whose virtues are more felt than seen,
Must drop indeed the hope of public praise ;
But he may boast, what few that win it can,
That, if his country stand not by his skill,
At least his follies have not wrought her fall.
Polite refinement offers him in vain
Her golden tube, through which a sensual world
Draws gross impurity, and likes it well,
The neat conveyance hiding all the offence.
Not that he peevishly rejects a mode
Because that world adopts it. If it bear
The stamp and clear impression of good sense,
And be not costly more than of true worth,
He puts it on, and, for decorum sake,

Can wear it e'en as gracefully as she.
She judges of refinement by the eye,
He by the test of conscience, and a heart
Not soon deceived—aware that what is base
No polish can make sterling; and that vice,
Though well perfumed and elegantly dressed,
Like an unburied carcass tricked with flowers,
Is but a garnished nuisance, fitter far
For cleanly riddance than for fair attire.
So life glides smoothly and by stealth away,
More golden than that age of fabled gold
Renowned in ancient song; not vexed with care
Or stained with guilt, beneficent, approved
Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.
So glide my life away! and so at last,
My share of duties decently fulfilled,
May some disease, not tardy to perform
Its destined office, yet with gentle stroke,
Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,
Beneath the turf that I have often trod.
It shall not grieve me, then, that once, when called
To dress a sofa with the flowers of verse,
I played awhile, obedient to the fair,
With that light task; but soon, to please her more,
Whom flowers alone I knew would little please,
Let fall the unfinished wreath, and roved for fruit;
Roved far, and gathered much: some harsh, 'tis true,
Picked from the thorns and briers of reproof,
But wholesome, well digested, grateful some
To palates that can taste immortal truth;
Inspid else, and sure to be despised.
But all is in His hand whose praise I seek.
In vain the poet sings, and the world hears,
If he regard not, though divine the theme.
'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime
And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,
To charm His ear, whose eye is on the heart;
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation prosper even mine.



TIROCINIUM;
OR,
A REVIEW OF SCHOOLS.

TO the REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORNE UNWIN, Rector of Stock, in Essex, the
Tutor of his two Sons, the following Poem, recommending Private
Tuition in preference to an Education at School, is inscribed, by his
affectionate Friend,

WILLIAM COWPER.

OLNEY, NOV. 6, 1784.

It is not from his form, in which we trace
Strength joined with beauty, dignity with grace,
That man, the master of this globe, derives
His right of empire over all that lives.
That form, indeed, the associate of a mind
Vast in its powers, ethereal in its kind,
That form, the labour of Almighty skill,
Framed for the service of a freeborn will,
Asserts precedence, and bespeaks control,
But borrows all its grandeur from the soul.
Hers is the state, the splendour, and the throne,
An intellectual kingdom all her own.
For her the memory fills her ample page
With truths poured down from every distant age;
For her amasses an unbounded store,
The wisdom of great nations now no more;
Though laden, not encumbered with her spoil;
Laborious, yet unconscious of her toil;

When copiously supplied, then most enlarged ;
 Still to be fed, and not to be surcharged.
 For her the fancy, roving unconfined,
 The present muse of every pensive mind,
 Works magic wonders, adds a brighter hue
 To nature's scenes than nature ever know ;
 At her command, winds rise and waters roar,
 Again she lays them slumbering on the shore ;
 With flower and fruit the wilderness supplies,
 Or bids the rocks in ruder pomp arise.
 For her, the judgment, umpire in the strife
 That grace and nature have to wage through life,
 Quick-sighted arbiter of good and ill,
 Appointed sage preceptor to the will,
 Condemns, approves, and with a faithful voice
 Guides the decision of a doubtful choice.

Why did the fiat of a God give birth
 To yon fair sun and his attendant earth ?
 And, when descending, he resigns the skies,
 Why takes the gentler moon her turn to rise,
 Whom ocean feels through all his countless waves,
 And owns her power on every shore he laves ?
 Why do the seasons still enrich the year,
 Fruitful and young as in their first career ?
 Spring hangs her infant blossoms on the trees,
 Rocked in the cradle of the western breeze ;
 Summer in haste the thriving charge receives
 Beneath the shade of her expanded leaves,
 Till autumn's fiercer heats and plenteous dews
 Dye them at last in all their glowing hues.
 'Twere wild profusion all, and bootless waste,
 Power misemployed, munificence misplaced,
 Had not its Author dignified the plan,
 And crowned it with the majesty of man.
 Thus formed, thus placed, intelligent, and taught,
 Look where he will, the wonders God has wrought,
 The wildest scorner of his Maker's laws
 Finds in a sober moment time to pause,

To press the important question on his heart,
"Why formed at all, and wherefore as thou art?"
If man be what he seems, this hour a slave,
The next mere dust and ashes in the grave;
Endued with reason only to descry
His crimes and follies with an aching eye;
With passions, just that he may prove, with pain,
The force he spends against their fury vain;
And if, soon after having burnt, by turns,
With every lust with which frail nature burns,
His being end where death dissolves the bond,
The tomb take all, and all be blank beyond;
Then he, of all that nature has brought forth,
Stands self-impeached the creature of least worth,
And, useless while he lives and when he dies,
Brings into doubt the wisdom of the skies.

Truths that the learned pursue with eager thought
Are not important always as dear bought,
Proving at last, though told in pompous strains,
A childish waste of philosophic pains;
But truths on which depends our main concern,
That 'tis our shame and misery not to learn,
Shine by the side of every path we tread
With such a lustre, he that runs may read.
'Tis true that, if to trifle life away
Down to the sunset of their latest day,
Then perish on futurity's wide shore,
Like fleeting exhalations, found no more,
Were all that heaven required of humankind,
And all the plan their destiny designed,
What none could reverence all might justly blame,
And man would breathe but for his Maker's shame.
But reason heard, and nature well perused,
At once the dreaming mind is disabused.
If all we find possessing earth, sea, air,
Reflect his attributes who placed them there,
Fulfil the purpose, and appear designed
Proofs of the wisdom of the all-seeing mind,

'Tis plain the creature whom he chose to invest
 With kingship and dominion o'er the rest,
 Received his nobler nature, and was made
 Fit for the power in which he stands arrayed ;
 That first, or last, hereafter, if not here,
 He, too, might make his Author's wisdom clear,
 Praise him on earth, or, obstinately dumb,
 Suffer his justice in a world to come.
 This once believed, 'twere logic misapplied
 To prove a consequence by none denied,
 That we are bound to cast the minds of youth
 Betimes into the mould of heavenly truth,
 That, taught of God, they may indeed be wise
 Nor, ignorantly wandering, miss the skies.

In early days, the conscience has in most
 A quickness, which in later life is lost ;
 Preserved from guilt by salutary fears,
 Or guilty, soon relenting into tears.
 Too careless often, as our years proceed,
 What friends we sort with, or what books we read,
 Our parents yet exert a prudent care
 To feed our infant minds with proper fare ;
 And wisely store the nursery by degrees
 With wholesome learning, yet acquired with ease
 Neatly secured from being soiled or torn
 Beneath a pane of thin translucent horn,
 A book (to please us at a tender age,
 'Tis called a book, though but a single page)
 Presents the prayer the Saviour deigned to teach,
 Which children use, and parsons—when they preach.
 Lipping our syllables, we scramble next
 Through moral narrative, or sacred text ;
 And learn with wonder how this world began,
 Who made, who marred, and who has ransomed man.
 Points which, unless the Scripture made them plain,
 The wisest heads might agitate in vain.
 Oh thou, whom, borne on fancy's eager wing
 Back to the season of life's happy spring,



I pleased remember, and while memory yet
Holds fast her office here, can ne'er forgot ;
Ingenious dreamer, in whose well-told tale
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail ;
Whose humourous vein, strong sense, and simple style,
May teach the gayest, make the gravest smile ;
Witty, and well employed, and, like thy Lord,
Speaking in parables his slighted word ;
I name thee not, less so despised a name
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame ;
Yet e'en in transitory life's late day,
That mingles all my brown with sober gray,
Revere the man whose pilgrim marks the road,
And guides the progress of the soul to God.
'Twere well with most if books that could engage
Their childhood pleased them at a riper age ;
The man, approving what had charmed the boy,
Would die at last in comfort, peace, and joy,
And not with curses on his heart, who stole
The gem of truth from his unguarded soul.

The stamp of artless piety impressed
 By kind tuition on his yielding breast,
 The youth now bearded, and yet pert and raw,
 Regards with scorn, though once received with awe;
 And, warped into the labyrinth of lies,
 That babblers, called philosophers, devise,
 Blasphemes his creed, as founded on a plan
 Replete with dreams, unworthy of a man.
 Touch but his nature in its ailing part,
 Assert the native evil of his heart,
 His pride resents the charge, although the proof *
 Rise in his forehead, and seem rank enough :
 Point to the cure, describe a Saviour's cross
 As God's expedient to retrieve his loss,
 The young apostate sickens at the view,
 And hates it with the malice of a Jew.

How weak the barrier of mere nature proves,
 Opposed against the pleasures nature loves !
 While, self-betrayed and wilfully undone,
 She longs to yield, no sooner wooed than won.
 Try now the merits of this blest exchange
 Of modest truth for wit's eccentric range.
 Time was he closed as he began the day,
 With decent duty, not ashamed to pray ;
 The practice was a bond upon his heart,
 A pledge he gave for a consistent part ;
 Nor could he dare presumptuously displease
 A power, confessed so lately on his knees.
 But now farewell all legendary tales,
 The shadows fly, philosophy prevails ;
 Prayer to the winds, and caution to the waves ;
 Religion makes the free by nature slaves.
 Priests have invented, and the world admired
 What knavish priests promulgate as inspired ;
 Till reason, now no longer overawed,
 Resumes her powers, and spurns the clumsy fraud ;

* See 2 Chron. xxvi. 12.

And, common sense diffusing real day,
The meteor of the Gospel dies away.
Such rhapsodies our shrewd discerning youth
Learn from expert inquirers after truth ;
Whose only care, might truth presume to speak,
Is not to find what they profess to seek.
And thus, well-tutored only while we share
A mother's lecture and a nurse's care ;
And taught at schools much mythologic stuff,*
But sound religion sparingly enough ;
Our early notices of truth, disgraced,
Soon lose their credit, and are all effaced.

Would you your son should be a sot or dunce,
Lascivious, headstrong, or all these at once ;
That in good time the stripling's finished taste
For loose expense and fashionable waste
Should prove your ruin, and his own at last ;
Train him in public with a mob of boys,
Childish in mischief only and in noise,
Eles of a mannish growth, and five in ten
In infidelity and lewdness men.

(There shall he learn, ere sixteen winters old,
That authors are most useful pawned or sold ;
That pedantry is all that schools impart,
But taverns teach the knowledge of the heart ;
There waiter Dick, with bacchanalian lays,
Shall win his heart, and have his drunken praise,
His counsellor and bosom friend shall prove,
And some street-pacing harlot his first love.
Schools, unless discipline were doubly strong,
Detain their adolescent charge too long ;
The management of tyros of eighteen
Is difficult, their punishment obscene.

* The author begs leave to explain.—Sensible that, without such knowledge, neither the ancient poets nor historians can be tasted, or indeed understood, he does not mean to censure the pains that are taken to instruct a schoolboy in the religion of the heathen, but merely that neglect of Christian culture which leaves him shamefully ignorant of his own.

The stout tall captain, whose superior size
The minor heroes view with envious eyes,
Becomes their pattern, upon whom they fix
Their whole attention, and ape all his tricks



His pride, that scorns to obey or to submit,
With them is courage ; his effrontery wit.
His wild excursions, window-breaking feats,
Robbery of gardens, quarrels in the streets,
His hairbreadth 'scapes, and all his daring schemes,
Transport them, and are made their favourite themes.
In little bosoms such achievements strike
A kindred spark : they burn to do the like.

Thus half-accomplished ere he yet begin
To show the peeping down upon his chin ;
And, as maturity of years comes on,
Made just the adept that you designed your son ;
To ensure the perseverance of his course,
And give your monstrous project all its force,
Send him to college. If he there be tamed,
Or in one article of vice reclaimed,
Where no regard of ordinances is shown
Or looked for now, the fault must be his own.
Some sneaking virtue lurks in him, no doubt,
Where neither strumpets' charms, nor drinking bout,
Nor gambling practices can find it out,
Such youths of spirit, and that spirit too,
Ye nurseries of our boys, we owe to you ;
Though from ourselves the mischief more proceeds,
For public schools 'tis public folly feeds.
The slaves of custom and established mode,
With packhorse constancy we keep the road,
Crooked or straight, through quags or thorny dells,
True to the jingling of our leader's bells.
To follow foolish precedents, and wink
With both our eyes, is easier than to think :
And such an age as ours balks no expense,
Except of caution and of common sense ;
Else sure notorious fact, and proof so plain,
Would turn our steps into a wiser train.
I blame not those who, with what care they can,
O'erwatch the numerous and unruly clan ;
Or, if I blame, 'tis only that they dare
Promise a work of which they must despair.
Have ye, ye sage intendants of the whole,
A ubiquarian presence and control,
Elisha's eye, that, when Gehazi strayed,
Went with him, and saw all the game he played ?
Yes—ye are conscious ; and on all the shelves
Your pupils strike upon have struck yourselves.

Or if, by nature sober, ye had then,
 Boys as ye were, the gravity of men,
 Ye knew at least, by constant proofs addressed
 To ears and eyes, the vices of the rest.
 But ye connive at what ye cannot cure,
 And evils not to be endured endure,
 Lest power exerted, but without success,
 Should make the little ye retain still less.
 Ye once were justly famed for bringing forth
 Undoubted scholarship and genuine worth ;
 And in the firmament of fame still shines
 A glory, bright as that of all the signs
 Of poets raised by you, and statesmen, and divines.
 Peace to them all ! those brilliant times are fled,
 And no such lights are kindling in their stead.
 Our striplings shine indeed, but with such rays
 As set the midnight riot in a blaze ;
 And seem, if judged by their expressive looks,
 Deeper in none than in their surgeons' books.

Say, muse (for education made the song,
 No muse can hesitate, or linger long),
 What causes move us, knowing, as we must,
 That these menageries all fail their trust,
 To send our sons to scout and scamper there,
 While colts and puppies cost us so much care ?

Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,
 We love the play-place of our early days ;
 The scene is touching, and the heart is stone
 That feels not at that sight, and feels at none.
 The wall on which we tried our graving skill,
 The very name we carved subsisting still ;
 The bench on which we sat while deep employed,
 Though mangled, hacked, and hewed, not yet destroyed ;
 The little ones, unbuttoned, glowing hot,
 Playing our games, and on the very spot ;
 As happy as we once to kneel and draw
 The chalky ring, and knuckle down at taw ;

To pitch the ball into the grounded hat,
Or drive it devious with a dexterous pat ;
The pleasing spectacle at once excites
Such recollection of our own delights,
That, viewing it, we seem almost to obtain
Our innocent sweet simple years again.
This fond attachment to the well-known place,
Whence first we started into life's long race,
Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
We feel it e'en in age, and at our latest day.
Spark ! how the sire of chits, whose future share
Of classic food begins to be his care,
With his own likeness placed on either knee,
Indulges all a father's heartfelt glee ;
And tells them, as he strokes their silver locks,
That they must soon learn Latin, and to box ;
Then, turning, he regales his listening wife
With all the adventures of his early life ;
His skill in coachmanship, or driving chaise,
In bilking tavern-bills, and spouting plays ;
What shifts he used, detected in a scrape,
(How he was flogged, or had the luck to escape ;
What sums he lost at play, and how he sold
Watch, seals, and all—till all his pranks are told.
Retracing thus his frolics ('tis a name
That palliates deeds of folly and of shame),
He gives the local bias all its sway ;
Resolves that where he played his sons shall play,
And destines their bright genius to be shown
Just in the scene where he displayed his own.
The meek and bashful boy will soon be taught
To be as bold and forward as he ought ;
The rude will scuffle through with ease enough,
Great schools suit best the sturdy and the rough.
Ah, happy designation, prudent choice,
The event is sure ; expect it, and rejoice !
Soon see your wish fulfilled in either child,
The pert made perter, and the 'ame made wild.

The great, indeed, by titles, riches, birth,
 Excused the encumbrance of more solid worth,
 Are best disposed of where with most success
 They may acquire that confident address,
 Those habits of profuse and lewd expense,
 That scorn of all delights but those of sense,
 Which, though in plain plebeians we condemn,
 With so much reason all expect from them.
 But families of less illustrious fame,
 Whose chief distinction is their spotless name,
 Whose heirs (their honours none, their income small),
 Must shine by true desert, or not at all,
 What dream they of, that, with so little care,
 They risk their hopes, their dearest treasure, there?
 They dream of little Charles or William graced
 With wig prolix, down flowing to his waist:
 They see the attentive crowds his talents draw,
 They hear him speak—the oracle of law.
 The father, who designs his babe a priest,
 Dreams him episcopally such at least;
 And, while the playful jockey scours the room
 Briskly, astride upon the parlour-broom,
 In fancy sees him more superbly ride
 In coach with purple lined, and mitres on its side.
 Events improbable and strange as these,
 Which only a parental eye foresees,
 A public school shall bring to pass with ease.
 But how? Resides such virtue in that air,
 As must create an appetite for prayer?
 And will it breathe into him all the zeal
 That candidates for such a prize should feel,
 To take the lead, and be the foremost still
 In all true worth and literary skill?
 “Ah, blind to bright futurity, untaught
 The knowledge of the world, and dull of thought!
 Church ladders are not always mounted best
 By learned clerks and Latinists professed.

The exalted prize demands an upward look,
Not to be found by poring on a book.
Small skill in Latin, and still less in Greek,
Is more than adequate to all I seek.
Let erudition grace him, or not grace,
I give the bauble but the second place;
His wealth, fame, honours, all that I intend,
Subsist and centre in one point—a friend;
A friend, whate'er he studies or neglects,
Shall give him consequence, heal all defects.
His intercourse with peers and sons of peers—
There dawns the splendour of his future years:
In that bright quarter his propitious skies
Shall blush betimes, and there his glory rise.
Your lordship, and Your grace! what school can teach
A rhetoric equal to those parts of speech?
What need of Homer's verse, or Tully's prose,
Sweet interjections! if he learn but those?
Let reverend churls his ignorance rebuke,
Who starve upon a dog's-eared Pentateuch,
The parson knows enough who knows a duke.”
Egregious purpose! worthily begun
In barbarous prostitution of your son;
Pressed on his part by means that would disgrace
A scrivener's clerk, or footman out of place,
And ending, if at last its end be gained,
In sacrilege—in God's own house profaned.
It may succeed; and, if his sins should call
For more than common punishment, it shall:
The wretch shall rise, and be the thing on earth
Least qualified, in honour, learning, worth,
To occupy a sacred, awful post,
In which the best and worthiest tremble most.
The royal letters are a thing of course—
A king, that would, might recommend his horse;
And deans, no doubt, and chapters, with one voice,
As bound in duty, would confirm the choice.

Behold your bishop ! well he plays his part,
 Christian in name, and infidel in heart,
 Ghostly in office, earthly in his plan,
 A slave at court, elsewhere a lady's man.
 Dumb as a senator, and as a priest
 A piece of mere church furniture at best ;
 To live estranged from God his t'cal scope,
 And his end sure, without one glimpse of hope.
 But, fair although and feasible it seem,
 Depend not much upon your golden dream ;
 For Providence, that seems concerned to exempt
 The hallowed bench from absolute contempt,
 In spite of all the wrigglers into place,
 Still keeps a seat or two for worth and grace ;
 And therefore 'tis, that, though the sight be rare,
 We sometimes see a Lowth or Bagot there.
 Besides, school friendships are not always found,
 Though fair in promise, permanent and sound ;
 The most disinterested and virtuous minds,
 In early years connected, time unbinds ;
 New situations give a different cast
 Of habit, inclination, temper, taste ;
 And he, that seemed our counterpart at first,
 Soon shows the strong similitude reversed.
 Young heads are giddy, and young hearts are warm,
 And make mistakes for manhood to reform.
 Boys are, at best, but pretty buds unblown,
 Whose scent and hues are rather guessed than known :
 Each dreams that each is just what he appears,
 But learns his error in maturer years,
 When disposition, like a sail unfurled,
 Shows all its rents and patches to the world.
 If, therefore, e'en when honest in design,
 A boyish friendship may so soon decline,
 'Twere wiser sure to inspire a little heart
 With just abhorrence of so mean a part,
 Than set your son to work at a vile trade
 For wages so unlikely to be paid.

Our public hives of puerile resort,
That are of chief and most approved report,
To such base hopes, in many a sordid soul,
Owe their repute in part, but not the whole.
A principle, whose proud pretensions pass
Unquestioned, though the jewel be but glass—
That with a world, not often overnice,
Ranks as a virtue, and is yet a vice;
Or rather a gross compound, justly tried,
Of envy, hatred, jealousy, and pride—
Contributes most perhaps to enhance their fame;
And emulation is its specious name.
Boys, once on fire with that contentious zeal,
Feel all the rage that female rivals feel;
The prize of beauty in a woman's eyes,
Not brighter than in theirs the scholar's prize:
The spirit of that competition burns
With all varieties of ill by turns;
Each vainly magnifies his own success,
Resents his fellows, wishes it were less,
Exults in his miscarriage, if he fail,
Deems his reward too great, if he prevail,
And labours to surpass him day and night,
Less for improvement than to tickle spite.
The spur is powerful, and I grant its force;
It pricks the genius forward in its course,
Allows short time for play, and none for sloth;
And, felt alike by each, advances both:
But judge, where so much evil intervenes,
The end, though plausible, not worth the means.
Weigh, for a moment, classical desert
Against a heart depraved and temper hurt;
Hurt, too, perhaps for life; for early wrong
Done to the nobler part affects it long:
And you are stanch indeed in learning's cause,
If you can crown a discipline, that draws
Such mischiefs after it, with much applause.

Connection formed for interest, and endeared
 By selfish views thus censured and cashiered ;
 And emulation, as engendering hate,
 Doomed to a no less ignominious fate ;
 The props of such proud seminaries fall,
 The Jachin and the Boaz of them all.
 Great schools rejected, then, as those that swell
 Beyond a size that can be managed well,
 Shall royal institutions miss the bays,
 And small academies win all the praise ?
 Force not my drift beyond its just intent,
 I praise a school, as Pope a government ;
 So take my judgment in his language dressed—
 “ Whate’er is best administered is best.”
 Few boys are born with talents that excel,
 But all are capable of living well ;
 Then ask not, whether limited or large ?
 But, watch they strictly, or neglect their charge ?
 If anxious only that their boys may learn,
 While morals languish, a despised concern,
 The great and small deserve one common blame,
 Different in size, but in effect the same.
 Much zeal in virtue’s cause all teachers boast,
 Though motives of mere lucre sway the most ;
 Therefore in towns and cities they abound,
 For there the game they seek is easiest found ;
 Though there, in spite of all that care can do,
 Traps to catch youth are most abundant too.
 If shrewd, and of a well-constructed brain,
 Keen in pursuit, and vigorous to retain,
 Your son come forth a prodigy of skill ;
 As, wheresoever taught, so formed, he will ;
 The pedagogue, with self-complacent air,
 Claims more than half the praise as his due share.
 But if, with all his genius, he betray,
 Not more intelligent than loose and gay,
 Such vicious habits as disgrace his name,
 Threaten his health, his fortune, and his fame ;

Though want of due restraint alone have bred
The symptoms that you see with so much dread;
Unenvied there, he may sustain alone
The whole reproach—the fault was all his own.

Oh, 'tis a sight to be with joy perused,
By all whom sentiment has not abused;
New-fangled sentiment, the boasted grace
Of those who never feel in the right place;
A sight surpassed by none that we can show,
Though Vestris on one leg still shine below;
A father blest with an ingenuous son,
Father, and friend, and tutor, all in one.
How!—turn again to tales long since forgot,
Æsop, and Phædrus, and the rest!—Why not?
He will not blush, that has a father's heart,
To take in childish plays a childish part;
But bends his sturdy back to any toy
That youth takes pleasure in, to please his boy;
Then why resign into a stranger's hand
A task as much within your own command,
That God and nature, and your interest too,
Seem with one voice to delegate to you?
Why hire a lodging in a house unknown
For one whose tenderest thoughts all hover round your
This second weaning, needless as it is, [own?
How does it lacerate both your heart and his!
The indented stick, that loses day by day
Notch after notch, till all are smoothed away,
Bears witness, long ere his dismissal come,
With what intense desire he wants his home.
But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof
Bid fair enough to answer in the proof,
Harmless, and safe, and natural, as they are,
A disappointment waits him even there:
Arrived, he feels an unexpected change;
He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange,
No longer takes, as once, with fearless ease,
His favourite stand between his father's knees,

But seeks the corner of some distant seat,
 And eyes the door, and watches a retreat ;
 And, least familiar where he should be most,
 Feels all his happiest privileges lost.
 Alas, poor boy !—the natural effect
 Of love by absence chilled into respect.
 Say, what accomplishments, at school acquired,
 Brings he, to sweeten fruits so undesired ?
 Thou well deserv'st an alienated son,
 Unless thy conscious heart acknowledge—none ;
 None that, in thy domestic snug recess,
 He had not made his own with more address,
 Though some, perhaps, that shock thy feeling mind,
 And better never learned, or left behind.
 Add too, that thus estranged, thou canst obtain
 By no kind arts his confidence again ;
 That here begins with most that long complaint
 Of filial frankness lost, and love grown faint,
 Which, oft neglected, in life's waning years
 A parent pours into regardless ears.

Like caterpillars, dangling under trees
 By slender threads, and swinging in the breeze,
 Which filthily bewray and sore disgrace
 The boughs in which are bred the unseemly race ;
 While every worm industriously weaves
 And winds his web about the rivelled leaves ;
 So numerous are the follies that annoy
 The mind and heart of every sprightly boy ;
 Imaginations noxious and perverse,
 Which admonition can alone disperse.
 The encroaching nuisance asks a faithful hand,
 Patient, affectionate, of high command,
 To check the procreation of a breed
 Sure to exhaust the plant on which they feed.
 'Tis not enough that Greek or Roman page,
 At stated hours, his freakish thoughts engage ;
 E'en in his pastimes he requires a friend
 To warn, and teach him safely to unbend ;

Over all his pleasures gently to preside,
Watch his emotions, and control their tide;
And levying thus, and with an easy sway,
A tax of profit from his very play,
To impress a value not to be erased,
On moments squandered else, and running all to waste.
And seems it nothing in a father's eye,
That unimproved those many moments fly?
And is he well content his son should find
No nourishment to feed his growing mind,
But conjugated verbs and nouns declined?
For such is all the mental food purveyed
By public hackneys in the schooling trade;
Who feed a pupil's intellect with store
Of syntax, truly, but with little more;
Dismiss their cares when they dismiss their flock,
Machines themselves, and governed by a clock.
Perhaps a father, blest with any brains,
Would deem it no abuse, or waste of pains,
To improve this diet, at no great expense,
With savoury truth and wholesome common sense;
To lead his son, for prospects of delight,
To some not steep, though philosophic, height,
Thence to exhibit to his wondering eyes
Yon circling worlds, their distance, and their size,
The moons of Jove, and Saturn's belted ball,
And the harmonious order of them all;
To show him in an insect or a flower,
Such microscopic proof of skill and power,
As, hid from ages past, God now displays,
To combat atheists with in modern days;
To spread the earth before him, and commend,
With designation of the finger's end,
Its various parts to his attentive note,
Thus bringing home to him the most remote;
To teach his heart to glow with generous flame,
Caught from the deeds of men of ancient fame;

And, more than all, with commendation due,
 To set some living worthy in his view,
 Whose fair example may at once inspire
 A wish to copy what he must admire.
 Such knowledge, gained betimes, and which appears,
 Though solid, not too weighty for his years,
 Sweet in itself, and not forbidding sport,
 When health demands it, of athletic sort,
 Would make him, what some lovely boys have been,
 And more than one, perhaps, that I have seen—
 An evidence and reprehension both
 Of the mere schoolboy's lean and tardy growth.

Art thou a man professionally tied,
 With all thy faculties elsewhere applied,
 Too busy to intend a meaner care
 Than how to enrich thyself, and next thine heir;
 Or art thou (as, though rich, perhaps thou art)
 But poor in knowledge, having none to impart:
 Behold that figure, neat, though plainly clad;
 His sprightly mingled with a shade of sad;
 Not of a nimble tongue, though now and then
 Heard to articulate like other men;
 No jester, and yet lively in discourse,
 His phrase well-chosen, clear, and full of force;
 And his address, if not quite French in ease,
 Not English stiff, but frank, and formed to please;
 Low in the world, because he scorns its arts;
 A man of letters, manners, morals, parts;
 Unpatronised, and therefore little known;
 Wise for himself and his few friends alone—
 In him thy well-appointed proxy see,
 Armed for a work too difficult for thee;
 Prepared by taste, by learning, and true worth,
 To form thy son, to strike his genius forth;
 Beneath thy roof, beneath thine eye, to prove
 The force of discipline when backed by love;
 To double all thy pleasure in thy child,
 His mind informed, his morals undefiled.

Safe under such a wing, the boy shall show
No spots contracted among grooms below,
Nor taint his speech with meannesses, designed
By footman Tom for witty and refined.
There, in his commerce with the liveried herd,
Lurks the contagion chiefly to be feared;
For since (so fashion dictates) all, who elaim
A higher than a mere plebeian fame,
Find it expedient, come what mischief may,
To entertain a thief or two in pay
(And they that can afford the expense of more,
Some half-a-dozen, and some half-a-score),
Great cause occurs to save him from a band
So sure to spoil him, and so near at hand;
A point secured, if once he be supplied
With some such mentor always at his side.
Are such men rare? perhaps they would abound
Were occupation easier to be found,
Were education, else so sure to fail,
Conducted on a manageable scale,
And schools, that have outlived all just esteem,
Exchanged for the secure domestic scheme.
But, having found him, be thou duke or earl,
Show thou hast sense enough to prize the pearl,
And, as thou wouldst the advancement of thine heir
In all good faculties beneath his care,
Respect, as is but rational and just,
A man deemed worthy of so dear a trust.
Despised by thee, what more can he expect
From youthful folly than the same neglect?
A flat and fatal negative obtains
That instant upon all his future pains;
His lessons tire, his mild rebukes offend,
And all the instructions of thy son's best friend
Are a stream choked, or trickling to no end.
Doom him not then to solitary meals;
But recollect that he has sense, and feels;

And that, possessor of a soul refined,
 An upright heart, and cultivated mind,
 His post not mean, his talents not unknown,
 He deems it hard to vegetate alone.
 And, if admitted at thy board he sit,
 Account him no just mark for idle wit :
 Offend not him, whom modesty restrains
 From repartee, with jokes that he disdain ;
 Much less transfix his feelings with an oath ;
 Nor frown, unless he vanish with the cloth.
 And, trust me, his utility may reach
 To more than he is hired or bound to teach ;
 Much trash unuttered, and some ills undone,
 Through reverence of the censor of thy son.

But, if thy table be indeed unclean,
 Foul with excess, and with discourse obscene,
 And thou a wretch, whom, following her old plan,
 The world accounts an honourable man,
 Because forsooth thy courage has been tried
 And stood the test, perhaps on the wrong side ;
 Though thou hadst never grace enough to prove
 That anything but vice could win thy love ;
 Or hast thou a polite, card-playing wife,
 Chained to the routs that she frequents for life ;
 Who, just when industry begins to snore,
 Flies, winged with joy, to some coach-crowded door ;
 And thrice in every winter throngs thine own
 With half the chariots and sedans in town,
 Thyself meanwhile e'en shifting as thou mayst ;
 Not very sober though, nor very chaste ;
 Or is thine house, though less superb thy rank,
 If not a scene of pleasure, a mere blank,
 And thou at best, and in thy soberest mood,
 A trifle vain, and empty of all good ;
 Though mercy for thyself thou canst have none,
 Hear nature plead, show mercy to thy son.
 Saved from his home, where every day brings forth
 Some mischief fatal to his future worth,

Find him a better in a distant spot,
Within some pious pastor's humble cot,
Where vile example (yours I chiefly mean,
The most seducing, and the oftenest seen)
May never more be stamped upon his breast,
Not yet perhaps incurably impressed :
Where early rest makes early rising sure,
Disease or comes not, or finds easy cure,
Prevented much by diet neat and plain ;
Or, if it enter, soon starved out again :
Where all the attention of his faithful host,
Discreetly limited to two at most,
May raise such fruits as shall reward his care,
And not at last evaporate in air :
Where, stillness aiding study, and his mind
Serene, and to his duties much inclined,
Not occupied in day-dreams, as at home,
Of pleasures past, or follies yet to come,
His virtuous toil may terminate at last
In settled habit and decided taste.
But whom do I advise ? the fashion-led,
The incorrigibly wrong, the deaf, the dead !
Whom care and cool deliberation suit
Not better much than spectacles a brute ;
Who, if their sons some slight tuition share,
Deem it of no great moment whose, or where ;
Too proud to adopt the thoughts of one unknown,
And much too gay to have any of their own.
But courage, man ! methought the Muse replied,
Mankind are various, and the world is wide :
The ostrich, silliest of the feathered kind,
And formed of God without a parent's mind,
Commits her eggs, incautious, to the dust,
Forgetful that the foot may crush the trust ;
And while on public nurseries they rely,
Not knowing, and too oft not caring, why,
Irrational in what they thus prefer,
No few, that would seem wise, resemble her.

But all are not alike. Thy warning voice
 May here and there prevent erroneous choice ;
 And some, perhaps, who, busy as they are,
 Yet make their progeny their dearest care
 (Whose hearts will ache, once told what ills may reach
 Their offspring, left upon so wild a beach),
 Will need no stress of argument to enforce
 The expedience of a less adventurous course ;
 The rest will slight thy counsel, or condemn ;
 But they have human feelings—turn to them.

To you, then, tenants of life's middle state,
 Securely placed between the small and great,
 Whose character, yet undebauched, retains
 Two-thirds of all the virtue that remains ;
 Who, wise yourselves, desire your sons should learn
 Your wisdom and your ways—to you I turn.
 Look round you on a world perversely blind ;
 See what contempt is fallen on humankind ;
 See wealth abused, and dignities misplaced,
 Great titles, offices, and trusts disgraced,
 Long lines of ancestry, renowned of old,
 Their noble qualities all quenched and cold ;
 See Bodlam's closeted and handcuffed charge
 Surpassed in frenzy by the mad at large ;
 See great commanders making war a trade,
 Great lawyers, lawyers without study made,
 Churchmen, in whose esteem their best employ
 Is odious, and their wages all their joy,
 Who, far enough from furnishing their shelves
 With Gospel lore, turn infidels themselves ;
 See womanhood despised, and manhood shamed
 With infamy too nauseous to be named ;
 Fops at all corners, ladylike in mien,
 Civeted fellows, smelt ere they are seen,
 Else coarse and rude in manners, and their tongue
 On fire with curses, and with nonsense hung,
 Now flushed with drunkenness, now with whoredom pale,
 Their breath a sample of last night's regale ;

See volunteers in all the vilest arts,
Men well endowed, of honourable parts,
Designed by nature wise, but self-made fools :
All these, and more like these, were bred at schools.
And if it chance, as sometimes chance it will,
That, though school-bred, the boy be virtuous still,
Such rare exceptions, shining in the dark,
Prove, rather than impeach, the just remark
As here and there a twinkling star descried
Serves but to show how black is all beside.
Now look on him, whose very voice in tone
Just echoes thine, whose features are thine own,
And stroke his polished cheek of purest red,
And lay thine hand upon his flaxen head,
And say, My boy, the unwelcome hour is come,
When thou, transplanted from thy genial home,
Must find a colder soil and bleaker air,
And trust for safety to a stranger's care.
What character, what turn thou wilt assume
From constant converse with I know not whom ;
Who there will court thy friendship, with what views,
(And, artless as thou art, whom thou wilt choose ;
Though much depends on what thy choice shall be,
Is all chance medley and unknown to me.
Canst thou, the tear just trembling on thy lids,
And while the dreadful risk foreseen forbids ;
Free too, and under no constraining force,
Unless the sway of custom warp thy course ;
Lay such a stake upon the losing side,
Merely to gratify so blind a guide ?
Thou canst not ! Nature, pulling at thine heart,
Condemns the unfatherly, the imprudent part.
Thou wouldst not, deaf to nature's tenderest plea,
Turn him adrift upon a rolling sea.
Nor say, Go thither, conscious that there lay
A brood of asps, or quicksands, in his way ;
Then, only governed by the selfsame rule
Of natural pity, send him not to school.

No—guard him better. Is he not thine own,
 Thyself in miniature, thy flesh, thy bone?
 And hopest thou not ('tis every father's hope),
 That, since thy strength must with thy years elope,
 And thou wilt need some comfort to assuage
 Health's last farewell, a staff of thine old age,
 That then, in recompense of all thy cares,
 Thy child shall show respect to thy gray hairs,
 Befriend thee, of all other friends bereft,
 And give thy life its only cordial left?
 Aware, then, how much danger intervenes,
 To compass that good end, forecast the means.
 His heart, now passive, yields to thy command;
 Secure it thine, its key is in thine hand.
 If thou desert thy charge, and throw it wide,
 Nor heed what guests there enter and abide,
 Complain not if attachments lewd and base
 Supplant thee in it, and usurp thy place.
 But, if thou guard its sacred chambers sure
 From vicious inmates and delights impure,
 Either his gratitude shall hold him fast,
 And keep him warm and filial to the last;
 Or, if he prove unkind (as who can say
 But, being man, and therefore frail, he may?)
 One comfort yet shall cheer thine aged heart,
 Howe'er he slight thee—thou hast done thy part.

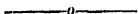
Oh, barbarous! wouldst thou with a Gothic hand
 Pull down the schools—what!—all the schools in the land;
 Or throw them up to livery-nags and grooms,
 Or turn them into shops and auction-rooms?
 A captious question, sir (and yours is one),
 Deserves an answer similar, or none.
 Wouldst thou, possessor of a flock, employ
 (Appriz'd that he is such) a careless boy,
 And feed him well, and give him handsome pay,
 Merely to sleep, and let them run astray?
 Survey our schools and colleges, and see
 A sight not much unlike my simile.

From education, as the leading cause,
The public character its colour draws;
Thence the prevailing manners take their cast,
Extravagant or sober, loose or chaste.
And, though I would not advertise them yet,
Nor write on each—This building to be let,
Unless the world were all prepared to embrace
A plan well-worthy to supply their place;
Yet, backward as they are, and long have been,
To cultivate and keep the morals clean
(Forgive the crime), I wish them, I confess,
Or better managed, or encouraged less.





MINOR POEMS.



THE YEARLY DISTRESS,

OR TITHING-TIME AT STOCK IN ESSEX.

Verses addressed to a country Clergyman complaining of the disagreeableness of the day annually appointed for receiving the dues at the parsonage.

COME, ponder well, for 'tis no jest,
To laugh it would be wrong,
The troubles of a worthy priest,
The burden of my song.

This priest he merry is and blithe
Three quarters of the year,
But oh ! it cuts him like a scythe
When tithing-time draws near.

He then is full of fright and fears,
As one at point to die,
And long before the day appears
He heaves up many a sigh.

For then the farmers come, jog, jog,
Along the miry road,
Each heart as heavy as a log,
To make their payments good.

In sooth, the sorrow of such days
Is not to be expressed,

When he that takes and he that pays
Are both alike distressed.

Now, all unwelcome at his gates,
The clumsy swains alight,
With rueful faces and bald pates—
He trembles at the sight.

And well he may, for well he knows
Each bumpkin of the clan,
Instead of paying what he owes,
Will cheat him if he can.

So in they come—each makes his leg,
And flings his head before,
And looks as if he came to beg,
And not to quit a score.



“And how does miss and madam do,
The little boy and all?”
“All tight and well. And how do you,
Good Mr. What-d’ye-call?”

The dinner comes, and down they sit :
Were e'er such hungry folk !
There's little talking, and no wit ;
It is no time to joke.

One wipes his nose upon his sleeve,
One spits upon the floor,
Yet, not to give offence or grieve,
Holds up the cloth before.

The punch goes round, and they are dull
And lumpish still as ever ;
Like barrels with their bellies full,
They only weigh the heavier.

At length the busy time begins,
"Come, neighbours, we must wag—"
The money chinks, down drop their chins,
Each lugging out his bag.

One talks of mildew and of frost,
And one of storms of hail,
And one of pigs that he has lost
By maggots at the tail.

Quoth one, "A rarer man than you
In pulpit none shall hear :
But yet, methinks, to tell you true,
You sell it plaguy dear."

O why are farmers made so coarse,
Or clergy made so fine ?
A kick, that scarce would move a horse,
May kill a sound divine.

Then let the boobies stay at home ;
'Twould cost him, I dare say,
Less trouble taking twice the sum
Without the clowns that pay.

SONNET TO HENRY COWPER, ESQ.

On his emphatical and interesting delivery of the defence of Warren
Hastings, Esq., in the House of Lords.

COWPER, whose silver voice, tasked sometimes hard,
Legends prolix delivers in the ears
(Attentive when thou read'st) of England's peers,
Let verse at length yield thee thy just reward.
Thou wast not heard with drowsy disregard,
Expendng late on all that length of plea
Thy generous powers, but silence honoured thee,
Mute as e'er gazed on orator or bard.
Thou art not voice alone, but hast beside
Both heart and head; and could'st with music sweet,
Of Attic phrase and senatorial tone,
Like thy renowned forefathers, far and wide
Thy fame diffuse, praised not for utterance meet
Of others' speech, but magic of thy own.

LINES ADDRESSED TO DR. DARWIN,

AUTHOR OF THE "BOTANIC GARDEN."

Two poets* (poets by report,
Not oft so well agree),
Sweet harmonist of Flora's court!
Conspire to honour thee.

They best can judge a poet's worth
Who oft themselves have known
The pangs of a poetic birth
By labours of their own.

Alluding to the poem by Mr. Hayley, which accompanied these lines.

We, therefore, pleased, extol thy song,
Though various, yet complete,
Rich in embellishment as strong,
And learned as 'tis sweet.

No envy mingles with our praise,
Though, could our hearts repine
At any poet's happier lays,
They would—they must at thine.

But we, in mutual bondage knit
Of friendship's closest tie,
Can gaze on even Darwin's wit
With an unjaundiced eye ;

And deem the bard, whoc'er he be,
And howsoever known,
Who would not twine a wreath for thee,
Unworthy of his own.

ON MRS. MONTAGU'S FEATHER-HANGINGS.

THE birds put off their every hue,
To dress a room for Montagu.
The peacock sends his heavenly dyes,
His rainbows, and his starry eyes ;
The pheasant plumes, which round infold
His mantling neck with downy gold ;
The cock his arched tail's azure show ;
And, river blanched, the swan his snow.
All tribes beside of Indian name,
That glossy shine, or vivid flame,
Where rises, and where sets the day,
Whate'er they boast of rich and gay,
Contribute to the gorgeous plan,
Proud to advance it all they can.

This plumage, neither dashing shower,
Nor blasts, that shake the dripping bower,
Shall drench again or discompose;
But screened from every storm that blows,
It boasts a splendour ever new,
Safe with protecting Montagu.

To the same patronness resort,
Secure of favour at her court,
Strong genius, from whose forge of thought
Forms rise, to quick perfection wrought,
Which, though new-born, with vigour move,
Like Pallas springing armed from Jove—
Imagination scattering round
Wild roses over furrowed ground,
Which labour of his frown beguile,
And teach philosophy a smile—
Wit flashing on religion's side,
Whose fires, to sacred truth applied,
The gem, though luminous before,
Obtrude on human notice more,
Like sunbeams on the golden height
Of some tall temple playing bright—
Well-tutored learning from his books,
Dismissed with grave, not haughty, looks.
Their order on his shelves exact,
Nor more harmonious or compact
Than that to which he keeps confined
The various treasures of his mind :
All these to Montagu's repair,
Ambitious of a shelter there.
There, genius, learning, fancy, wit,
Their ruffled plumage calm refit
(For stormy troubles loudest roar
Around their flight who highest soar),
And in her eye, and by her aid,
Shine safe without a fear to fade.

She thus maintains divided sway
With yon bright region of the day ;

The plume and poet both, we know,
 Their lustre to his influence owe ;
 And she, the works of Phœbus aiding,
 Both poet saves, and plume from fading.



V E R S E S,

Supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk, during his solitary abode
 in the island of Juan Fernandez.

I AM monarch of all I survey,
 My right there is none to dispute ;
 From the centre all round to the sea,
 I am lord of the fowl and the brute.
 O solitude ! where are the charms
 That sages have seen in thy face !
 Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
 Than reign in this horrible place.

I am out of humanity's reach,
I must finish my journey alone,
Never hear the sweet music of speech;
I start at the sound of my own!
The beasts that roam over the plain,
My form with indifference see;
They are so unacquainted with man,
Their tameness is shocking to me.

Society, friendship, and love,
Divinely bestowed upon man,
O, had I the wings of a dove,
How soon would I taste you again!
My sorrows I then might assuage
In the ways of religion and truth,
Might learn from the wisdom of age,
And be cheered by the sallies of youth.

Religion! what treasure untold
Resides in that heavenly word!
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford:
But the sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard,
Never sighed at the sound of a knell,
Or smiled when a Sabbath appeared.

Ye winds, that have made me your sport,
Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial endearing report
Of a land I shall visit no more.
My friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?
O tell me I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see.

How fleet is a glance of the mind!
Compared with the speed of its flight,

The tempest itself lags behind,
And the swift-winged arrows of light.
When I think of my own native land,
In a moment I seem to be there ;
But alas ! recollection at hand
Soon hurries me back to despair.

But the sea-fowl is gone to her nest,
The beast is laid down in his lair ;
Even here is a season of rest,
And I to my cabin repair.
There's mercy in every place,
And mercy—encouraging thought !—
Gives even affliction a grace,
And reconciles man to his lot.

ON OBSERVING SOME NAMES OF LITTLE NOTE

RECORDED IN THE "BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA."

OH, fond attempt to give a deathless lot
To names ignoble, born to be forgot !
In vain, recorded in historic page,
They court the notice of a future age :
Those twinkling tiny lustres of the land
Drop one by one from fame's neglecting hand ;
Lethæan gulfs receive them as they fall,
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all.
So when a child, as playful children use,
Has burnt to tinder a stale last year's news,
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire—
There goes my lady, and there goes the squire,
There goes the parson, oh, illustrious spark !
And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk !

REPORT OF AN ADJUDGED CASE,

NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY OF THE BOOKS.

BETWEEN Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose,
The spectacles set them unhappily wrong ;
The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,
To which the said spectacles ought to belong

So Tongue was the lawyer, and argued the cause
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning ;
While chief baron Ear sat to balance the laws,
So famed for his talent in nicely discerning.

In behalf of the Nose, it will quickly appear,
And your lordship, he said, will undoubtedly find
That the Nose has had spectacles always in wear,
Which amounts to possession time out of mind.

Then holding the spectacles up to the court—
Your lordship observes they are made with a straddle
As wide as the bridge of the Nose is ; in short,
Designed to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

Again, would your lordship a moment suppose
(’Tis a case that has happened, and may be again)
That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,
Pray who would, or who could, wear spectacles then ?

On the whole, it appears, and my argument shows,
With a reasoning the court will never condemn,
That the spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,
And the nose was as plainly intended for them.

Then shifting his side (as a lawyer knows how),
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes :

But what were his arguments few people know,
 For the court did not think they were equally wise.

So his lordship decreed, with a grave solemn tone,
 Decisive and clear, without one if or but—
 That, whenever the Nose put his spectacles on,
 By daylight or candlelight—Eyes should be shut?

ON THE
 PROMOTION OF EDWARD THURLOW, ESQ.
 TO THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLORSHIP OF ENGLAND.

ROUND Thurlow's head in early youth,
 And in his sportive days,
 Fair science poured the light of truth,
 And genius shed his rays.

See! with united wonder cried
 The experienced and the sage,
 Ambition in a boy supplied
 With all the skill of age!

Discernment, eloquence, and grace,
 Proclaim him born to sway
 The balance in the highest place,
 And bear the palm away.

The praise bestowed was just and wise;
 He sprang impetuous forth,
 Secure of conquest, where the prize
 Attends superior worth.

So the best courser on the plain
 Ere yet he starts is known,
 And does but at the goal obtain
 What all had deemed his own.

ODE TO PEACE.

COME, peace of mind, delightful guest!

Return and make thy downy nest

Once more in this sad heart :

Nor riches I nor power pursue,

Nor hold forbidden joys in view ;

We, therefore, need not part.

Where wilt thou dwell, if not with me,

From avarice and ambition free,

And pleasure's fatal wiles ?

For whom, alas ! dost thou prepare

The sweets that I was wont to share,

The banquet of thy smiles ?

The great, the gay, shall they partake

The heaven that thou alone canst make ;

And wilt thou quit the stream

That murmurs through the dewy mead,

The grove, and the sequestered shed,

To be a guest with them ?

For thee I panted, thee I prized,

For thee I gladly sacrificed

Whate'er I loved before ;

And shall I see thee start away,

And helpless, hopeless, hear thee say —

Farewell ! we meet no more !

HUMAN FRAILTY.

WEAK and irresolute is man :
The purpose of to-day,
Woven with pains into his plan,
To-morrow rends away.



The bow well bent, and smart the spring,
Vice seems already slain ;
But passion rudely snaps the string,
And it revives again.

Some foe to his upright intent
Finds out his weaker part ;
Virtue engages his assent,
But pleasure wins his heart.

'Tis here the folly of the wise
Through all his art we view ;
And while his tongue the charge denies,
His conscience owns it true.

Bound on a voyage of awful length,
And dangers little known,
A stranger to superior strength,
Man vainly trusts his own.

But oars alone can ne'er prevail
To reach the distant coast ;
The breath of heaven must swell the sail,
Or all the toil is lost.

THE MODERN PATRIOT.

REBELLION is my theme all day ;
I only wish 'twould come
(As who knows but perhaps it may !)
A little nearer home.

Yon roaring boys, who rave and fight
On t'other side the Atlantic,
I always held them in the right,
But most so when most frantic.

When lawless mobs insult the court,
That man shall be my toast,
If breaking windows be the sport,
Who bravely breaks the most.

But O ! for him my fancy culls
The choicest flowers she bears,
Who constitutionally pulls
Your house about your ears.

Such civil broils are my delight,
Though some folks can't endure them,
Who say the mob are mad outright,
And that a rope must cure them.

A rope ! I wish we patriots had
Such strings for all who need 'em—
What ! hang a man for going mad !
Then farewell British freedom.

ON THE
BURNING OF LORD MANSFIELD'S LIBRARY,

Together with his MSS., by the Mob, in the month of June, 1780.

So then—the Vandals of our isle,
Sworn foes to sense and law,
Have burnt to dust a nobler pile
Than ever Roman saw !

And Murray sighs o'er Pope and Swift,
And many a treasure more—
The well-judged purchase, and the gift
That graced his lettered store.

Their pages mangled, burnt, and torn,
The loss was his alone ;
But ages yet to come shall mourn
The burning of his own.

ON THE SAME.

When wit and genius meet their doom
In all-devouring flame,
They tell us of the fate of Rome,
And bid us fear the same.

O'er Murray's loss the muses wept,
They felt the rude alarm,

Yet blessed the guardian care that kept
His sacred head from harm.

There memory, like the bee that's fed
From Flora's balmy store,
The quintessence of all he read
Had treasured up before.

The lawless herd, with fury blind,
Have done him cruel wrong;
The flowers are gone—but still we find
The honey on his tongue.

THE LOVE OF THE WORLD REPROVED;

OR, HYPOCRISY DETECTED.*

THUS says the Prophet of the Turk,
Good Mussulman, abstain from pork;
There is a part in every swine
No friend or follower of mine
May taste, whate'er his inclination,
On pain of excommunication.
Such Mahomet's mysterious charge,
And thus he left the point at large.
Had he the sixful part expressed,
They might with safety eat the rest;
But, for one piece, they thought it hard
From the whole hog to be debarred;
And set their wit at work to find
What joint the prophet had in mind.
Much controversy straight arose—
These choose the back, the belly those;

* It may be proper to inform the reader that this piece has already appeared in print, having found its way, though with some unnecessary additions by an unknown hand, into the "*Leeds Journal*," without the author's privacy.

By some, 'tis confidently said,
He meant not to forbid the head;
While others at the doctrine rail,
And piously prefer the tail.
Thus, conscience freed from every clog,
Mahometans eat up the hog.

You laugh—'tis well—the tale applied,
May make you laugh on t'other side.
Renounce the world—the preacher cries.
We do—a multitude replies.
While one as innocent regards
A snug and friendly game at cards;
And one, whatever you may say,
Can see no evil in a play;
Some love a concert, or a race;
And others shooting, and the chase.
Reviled and loved, renounced and followed,
Thus bit by bit the world is swallowed;
Each thinks his neighbour makes too free,
Yet likes a slice as well as he:
With sophistry their sauce they sweeten,
Till quite from tail to snout 'tis eaten.

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. (NOW LADY) THROCK-
MORTON'S BULLFINCH.

YE nymphs! if ere your eyes were red
With tears o'er hapless favourites shed,
O share Maria's grief!
Her favourite, even in his cage,
(What will not hunger's cruel rage?)
Assassinated by a thief.

Where Rhenus strays his vines among,
The egg was laid from which he sprung;
And, though by nature mute,

Or only with a whistle blest,
Well taught he all the sounds expressed
Of flageolet or flute.



The honours of his ebon poll
Were brighter than the sleekest mole,
His bosom of the hue
With which Au-ora decks the skies,
When piping winds shall soon arise,
To sweep away the dew.

Above, below, in all the house,
Dire foe alike of bird and mouse,
No cat had leave to dwell ;
And Bully's cage supported stood
On props of smoothest shaven wood,
Large built and latticed well.

Well latticed—but the grate, alas!
Not rough with wire of steel on brass,
 For Bully's plumage sake,
But smooth with wands from Ouse's side,
With which, when neatly pealed and dried,
 The swains their baskets make.

Night veiled the pole : all seemed secure :
When, led by instinct sharp and sure,
 Subsistence to provide,
A beast forth sallied on the scout,
Long backed, long tailed, with whiskered snout,
 And badger-coloured hide.

He, entering at the study door,
Its ample area 'gan explore ;
 And something in the wind
Conjectured, sniffing round and round,
Better than all the books he found,
 Food chiefly for the mind.

Just then, by adverse fate impressed,
A dream disturbed poor Bully's rest ;
 In sleep he seemed to view
A rat fast clinging to the cage,
And, screaming at the sad presage,
 Awoke, and found it true.

For, aided both by ear and scent,
Right to his mark the monster went—
 Ah, muse! forbear to speak
Minute the horrors that ensued ;
His teeth were strong, the cage was wood—
 He left poor Bully's beak.

O had he made that too his prey !
That beak whence issued many a lay
 Of such mellifluous tone,

Might have repaid him well, I wot,
For silencing so sweet a throat,
Fast stuck within his own.

Maria weeps—the muses mourn :
So when, by bacchanalians torn,
On Thracian Hebrus' side
The tree-enchanter Orpheus fell,
His head alone remained to tell
The cruel death he died.

THE ROSE.

THE rose had been washed, just washed in a shower,
Which Mary to Anna conveyed,
The plentiful moisture encumbered the flower,
And weighed down its beautiful head.

The cup was all filled, and the leaves were all wet,
And it seemed, to a fanciful view,
To weep for the buds it had left, with regret,
On the flourishing bush where it grew.

I hastily seized it, unfit as it was
For a nosegay, so dripping and drowned,
And swinging it rudely, too rudely, alas !
I snapped it—it fell to the ground.

And such, I exclaimed, is the pitiless part
Some act by the delicate mind,
Regardless of wringing and breaking a heart
Already to sorrow resigned.



This elegant rose, had I shaken it less,
Might have bloomed with its owner a while ;
And the tear that is wiped, with a little address,
May be followed perhaps by a smile.

THE DOVES.

REASONING at every step he treads,
Man yet mistakes his way,
While meaner things, whom instinct leads,
Are rarely known to stray.

One silent eve, I wandered late,
And heard the voice of love ;
The turtle thus addressed her mate,
And soothed the listening dove :—

Our mutual bond of faith and truth
No time shall disengage,
Those blessings of our early youth
Shall cheer our latest age ;

While innocence, without disguise,
And constancy sincere,
Shall fill the circles of those eyes
(And mine can read them there),

Those ills that wait on all below
Shall ne'er be felt by me,
Or gently felt, and only so,
As being shared with thee.

When lightnings flash among the trees,
Or kites are hovering near,
I fear lest thee alone they seize,
And know no other fear.

'Tis then I feel myself a wife,
And press thy wedded side,
Resolved a union formed for life
Death never shall divide.

But, oh! if fickle and unchaste
 (Forgive a transient thought),
Thou couldst become unkind at last,
 And scorn thy present lot,

No need of lightnings from on high,
 Or kites with cruel beak :
Denied the endearments of thine eye,
 This widowed heart would break.

Thus sang the sweet sequestered bird,
 Soft as the passing wind,
And I recorded what I heard—
 A lesson for mankind.

A F A B L E.

A RAVEN, while with glossy breast
Her new-laid eggs she fondly pressed,
And, on her wickerwork high-mounted,
Her chickens prematurely counted
(A fault philosophers might blame
If quite exempted from the same),
Enjoyed at ease the genial day.
'Twas April, as the bumpkins say,
The legislature called it May.
But suddenly a wind, as high
As ever swept a winter sky,
Shook the young leaves about her ears,
And filled her with a thousand fears,
Lest the rude blast should snap the bough,
And spread her golden hopes below.
But just at eve the blowing weather
And all her fears were hushed together :
And now, quoth poor unthinking Ralph,
'Tis over, and the brood is safe

(For ravens, though, as birds of omen,
They teach both conjurers and old women
To tell us what is to befall,
Can't prophesy themselves at all).
The morning came, when neighbour Hodge,
Who long had marked her airy lodge,
And destined all the treasure there
A gift to his expecting fair,
Climbed like a squirrel to his dray,
And bore the worthless prize away.

M O R A L.

'Tis Providence alone secures
In every change both mine and yours :
Safety consists not in escape
From dangers of a frightful shape ;
An earthquake may be bid to spare
The man that's strangled by a hair.
Fate steals along with silent tread,
Found oftenest in what least we dread,
Frowns in the storm with angry brow,
But in the sunshine strikes the blow.

ODE TO APOLLO.

ON AN INKGLASS ALMOST DRIED IN THE SUN

PATRON of all those luckless brains -
That, to the wrong side leaning,
Indite much matter with much pains,
And little or no meaning—

Ah, why, since oceans, rivers, streams,
That water all the nations,
Pay tribute to thy glorious beams,
In constant exhalations ;

Why, stooping from the noon of day,
Too covetous of drink,
Apollo, hast thou stolen away
A poet's drop of ink!

Upborne into the viewless air,
It floats a vapour now,
Impelled through regions dense and rare,
By all the winds that blow,

Ordained, perhaps, ere summer flies,
Combined with millions more,
To form an iris in the skies,
Though black and foul before.

Illustrious drop! and happy then,
Beyond the happiest lot
Of all that ever passed my pen,
So soon to be forgot!

Phœbus, if such be thy design,
To place it in thy bow,
Give wit, that what is left may shine
With equal grace below.

A COMPARISON.

THE lapse of time and rivers is the same,
Both speed their journey with a restless stream :
The silent pace with which they steal away,
No wealth can bribe, no prayers persuade to stay ;
Alike irrevocable both when past,
And a wide ocean swallows both at last.
Though each resemble each in every part,
A difference strikes at length the musing heart ;

Streams never flow in vain ; where streams abound,
How laughs the land with various plenty crowned !
But time, that should enrich the nobler mind,
Neglected, leaves a dreary waste behind.

A N O T H E R.

ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY.

SWEET stream, that winds through yonder glade,
Apt emblem of a virtuous maid—
Silent and chaste, she steals along,
Far from the world's gay, busy throng ;
With gentle yet prevailing force,
Intent upon her destined course ;
Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and blest, where'er she goes ;
Pure bosomed, as that watery glass,
And heaven reflected in her face.

THE POET'S NEW-YEAR'S GIFT.

TO MRS. (NOW LADY) THROCKMORTON.

MARIA ! I have every good
For thee wished many a time,
Both sad, and in a cheerful mood,
But never yet in rhyme.

To wish thee fairer is no need,
More prudent or more sprightly,
Or more ingenious, or more freed
From temper flaws unsightly.

What favour then, not yet possessed,
Can I for thee require,

In wedded love already blest
To thy whole heart's desire?

None here is happy but in part :
Full bliss is bliss divine ;
There dwells some wish in every heart,
And doubtless one in thine.

That wish on some fair future day,
Which fate shall brightly gild
('Tis blameless, be it what it may),
I wish it all fulfilled.

PAIRING TIME ANTICIPATED.

A FABLE.

I SHALL not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau*
If birds confabulate or no ;
'Tis clear that they were always able
To hold discourse, at least in fable ;
And e'en the child who knows no better
Than to interpret, by the letter,
A story of a cock and bull,
Must have a most uncommon skull.

It chanced, then, on a winter's day,
But warm, and bright, and calm as May,
The birds, conceiving a design
To forestal sweet St. Valentine,
In many an orchard, copse, and grove,
Assembled on affairs of love,
And with much twitter and much chatter,
Began to agitate the matter.

* It was one of the whimsical speculations of this philosopher, that all fables, which ascribe reason and speech to animals, should be withheld from children, as being only vehicles of deception. But what child was ever deceived by them, or can be, against the evidence of his senses?

At length a Bullfinch, who could boast
More years and wisdom than the most,
Entreated, opening wide his beak,
A moment's liberty to speak ;
And, silence publicly enjoined,
Delivered briefly thus his mind :

My friends ! be cautious how ye treat
The subject upon which we meet ;
I fear we shall have winter yet.

A Finch, whose tongue knew no control,
With golden wing and satin poll,
A last year's bird, who ne'er had tried
What marriage means, thus pert replied :

Methinks the gentleman (quoth she)
Opposite in the apple-tree,
By his good will would keep us single
Till yonder heaven and earth shall mingle,
Or (which is likelier to befall)
Till death exterminate us all.

I marry without more ado ;
My dear Dick Redcap, what say you ?

Dick heard, and tweedling, ogling, bridling,
Turning short round, strutting, and sideling,
Attested glad his approbation
Of an immediate conjugation.
Their sentiments, so well expressed,
Influenced mightily the rest—
All paired, and each pair built a nest.

But, though the birds were thus in haste,
The leaves came on not quite so fast,
And destiny, that sometimes bears
An aspect stern on man's affairs,
Not longer smiled on theirs.
The wind, of late breathed gently forth,
Now shifted east, and east by north ;
Bare trees and shrubs but ill, you know,
Could shelter them from rain or snow ;

Stepping into their nests, they paddled,
 Themselves were chilled, their eggs were addled;
 Soon every father bird and mother
 Grew quarrelsome, and pecked each other;
 Parted without the least regret,
 Except that they had ever met,
 And learned in future to be wiser
 Than to neglect a good adviser.

MORAL.

Misses! the tale that I relate
 This lesson seems to carry—
 Choose not alone a proper mate,
 But proper time to marry.

THE DOG AND THE WATER-LILY.

NO FABLE.

THE noon was shady, and soft airs
 Swept Ouse's silent tide,
 When, 'scaped from literary cares,
 I wandered on its side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,
 And high in pedigree—
 (Two nymphs,* adorned with every grace,
 That spaniel found for me)—

Now wantoned lost in flags and reeds,
 Now starting into sight,
 Pursued the swallow o'er the meads,
 With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse displayed
 His lilies newly blown;

* Sir Robert Gunning's daughter's.

Their beauties I intent surveyed,
And one I wished my own.

With cane extended far, I sought
To steer it close to land ;
But still the prize, though nearly caught,
Escaped my eager hand.

Beau marked my unsuccessful pains
With fixed considerate face,
And, puzzling, set his puppy brains
To comprehend the case.

But with a cherup clear and strong,
Dispersing all his dream,
I thence withdrew, and followed long
The windings of the stream.

My ramble ended, I returned ;
Beau, trotting far before,
The floating wreath again discerned,
And, plunging, left the shore.

I saw him, with that lily cropped,
Impatient swim to meet
My quick approach, and soon he dropped
The treasure at my feet.

Charmed with the sight, the world, I cried,
Shall hear of this thy deed :
My dog shall mortify the pride
Of man's superior breed ;

But chief myself I will enjoin,
Awake at duty's call,
To show a love as prompt as thine
To Him who gives me all.

THE WINTER NOSEGAY.

WHAT nature, alas ! has denied
To the delicate growth of our isle,
Art has in a measure supplied,
And winter is decked with a smile.
See, Mary, what beauties I bring
From the shelter of that sunny shed,
Where the flowers have the charms of the spring.
Though abroad they are frozen and dead.

'Tis a bower of Arcadian sweets,
Where Flora is still in her prime,
A fortress to which she retreats
From the cruel assaults of the clime.
While earth wears a mantle of snow,
These pinks are as fresh and as gay
As the fairest and sweetest that blow
On the beautiful bosom of May.

See how they have safely survived
The frowns of a sky so severe ;
Such Mary's true love, that has lived
Through many a turbulent year.
The charms of the late blowing rose
Seemed graced with a livelier huc,
And the winter of sorrow best shows
The truth of a friend such as you.

THE POET, OYSTER, AND SENSITIVE PLANT.

AN oyster, cast upon the shore,
Was heard, though never heard before,
Complaining in a speech well worded,
And worthy thus to be recorded :—

Ah, hapless wretch ! condemned to dwell
For ever in my native shell ;
Ordained to move when others please,
Not for my own content or ease ;
But tossed and buffeted about,
Now in the water, and now out.
'Twere better to be born a stone,
Of ruder shape, and feeling none,
Than with a tenderness like mine,
And sensibilities so fine !
I envy that unfeeling shrub, `
Fast rooted against every rub.
The plant he meant grew not far off,
And felt the sneer with scorn enough ;
Was hurt, disgusted, mortified,
And with asperity replied :

(When, cry the botanists, and stare,
Did plants called sensitive grow there ?
No matter when—a poet's muse is
To make them grow just where she chooses.)

You shapeless nothing in a dish,
You that are but almost a fish,
I scorn your coarse insinuation,
And have most plentiful occasion
To wish myself the rock I view,
Or such another dolt as you :
For many a grave and learned clerk,
And many a gay unlettered spark,
With curious touch, examines me
If I can feel as well as he ;
And when I bend, retire, and shrink,
Says—Well, 'tis more than one would think !
Thus life is spent (oh, fie upon't !)
In being touched, and crying—Don't !
A poet, in his evening walk,
O'erheard and checked this idle talk.
And your fine sense, he said, and yours,
Whatever evil it endures,

Deserves not, if so soon offended,
 Much to be pitied or commended.
 Disputes, though short, are far too long,
 Where both alike are in the wrong;
 Your feelings, in their full amount,
 Are all upon your own account.

You, in your grotto work enclosed,
 Complain of being thus exposed;
 Yet nothing feel in that rough coat
 Save when the knife is at your throat,
 Wherever driven by wind or tide,
 Exempt from every ill beside.

And as for you, my Lady Squeamish,
 Who reckon every touch a blemish,
 If all the plants that can be found
 Embellishing the scene around,
 Should droop and wither where they grow,
 You would not feel at all—not you.
 The noblest minds their virtue prove
 By pity, sympathy, and love:
 These, these are feelings truly fine,
 And prove their owner half divine.

His censure reached them as he dealt it,
 And each, by shrinking, showed he felt it.

THE SHRUBBERY.

WRITTEN IN A TIME OF AFFLICTION.

Oh, happy shades—to me unblest !
 Friendly to peace, but not to me !
 How ill the scene that offers rest,
 And heart that cannot rest, agree !

This glassy stream, that spreading pine,
 Those alders quivering to the breeze,

Might soothe a soul less hurt than mine,
And please, if anything could please.

But fixed, unalterable care,
Foregoes not what she feels within,
Shows the same sadness everywhere,
And slights the season and the scene.

For all that pleased in wood or lawn,
While peace possessed these silent bowers,
Her animating smile withdrawn,
Has lost its beauties and its powers.

The saint or moralist should tread
This moss-grown alley, musing, slow ;
They seek, like me, the sacred shade,
But not, like me, to nourish woe !

Me fruitful scenes and prospects waste
Alike admonish not to roam ;
These tell me of enjoyments past,
And those of sorrows yet to come.

MUTUAL FORBEARANCE

NECESSARY TO THE HAPPINESS OF THE MARRIED STATE.

THE lady thus addressed her spouse—
What a mere dungeon is this house !
By no means large enough ; and was it,
Yet this dull room, and that dark closet,
Those hangings, with their worn-out graces,
Long beards, long noses, and pale faces,
Are such an antiquated scene,
They overwhelm me with the spleen.
Sir Humphrey, shooting in the dark,
Makes answer quite beside the mark :

No doubt, my dear, I bade him come,
Engaged myself to be at home,
And shall expect him at the door
Precisely when the clock strikes four.

You are so deaf, the lady cried
(And raised her voice, and frowned beside),
You are so sadly deaf, my dear,
What shall I do to make you hear?

Dismiss poor Harry! he replies;
Some people are more nice than wise;
For one slight trespass all this stir!
What if he did ride whip and spur,
'Twas but a mile—your favourite horse
Will never look one hair the worse.

Well, I protest 'tis past all bearing—
Child! I am rather hard of hearing—
Yes, truly—one must scream and bawl:
I tell you, you can't hear at all!
Then, with a voice exceeding low—
No matter if you hear or no.

Alas! and is domestic strife,
That sorest ill of human life,
A plague so little to be feared,
As to be wantonly incurred,
To gratify a fretful passion,
On every trivial provocation?
The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear;
And something, every day they live,
To pity, and perhaps forgive.
But if infirmities, that fall
In common to the lot of all,
A blemish or a sense impaired,
Are crimes so little to be spared,
Then farewell all that must create
The comfort of the wedded state;
Instead of harmony, 'tis jar,
And tumult, and intestine war.

The love that cheers life's latest stage,
Proof against sickness and old age,
Preserved by virtue from declension,
Becomes not weary of attention ;
But lives when that exterior grace
Which first inspired the flame, decays.
'Tis gentle, delicate, and kind,
To faults compassionate or blind,
And will with sympathy endure
Those evils it would gladly cure ;
But angry, coarse, and harsh expression,
Shows love to be a mere profession ;
Proves that the heart is none of his,
Or soon expels him if it is.

THE NEGRO'S COMPLAINT.

FORCED from home and all its pleasures,
Afric's coast I left forlorn ;
To increase a stranger's treasures,
O'er the raging billows borne.
Men from England bought and sold me,
Paid my price in paltry gold ;
But, slave though they have enrolled me,
Minds are never to be sold.

Still in thought as free as ever,
What are England's rights ? I ask,
Me from my delights to sever,
Me to torture, me to task ?
Fleecy locks and black complexion
Cannot forfeit nature's claim ;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same.

Why did all-creating nature
Make the plant for which we toil ?

Sighs must fan it, tears must water,
Sweat of ours must dress the soil.
Think, ye masters iron-hearted,
Lolling at your jovial boards,
Think how many backs have smarted
For the sweets your cane affords.

Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,
Is there One who reigns on high?
Has he bid you buy and sell us,
Speaking from his throne, the sky?
Ask him, if your knotted scourges,
Matches, blood-extorting screws,
Are the means that duty urges
Agents of his will to use?

Hark! he answers—wild tornadoes,
Strewing yonder sea with wrecks;
Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,
Are the voice with which he speaks.
He, foreseeing what vexations
Afric's sons should undergo,
Fixed their tyrants' habitations
Where his whirlwinds answer—No.

By our blood in Afric wasted,
Ere our necks received the chain;
By the miseries that we tasted,
Crossing in your barks the main;
By our sufferings, since ye brought us
To the man-degrading mart;
All sustained by patience, taught us
Only by a broken heart;

Deem our nation brutes no longer,
Till some reason ye shall find
Worthier of regard, and stronger
Than the colour of our kind.

Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted powers,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours.

PITY FOR POOR AFRICANS.

*Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.*

I own I am shocked at the purchase of slaves,
And fear those who buy them and sell them are knaves;
What I hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans,
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.

I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,
For how could we do without sugar and rum?
Especially sugar, so needful we see!
What! give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea!

Besides, if we do, the French, Dutch, and Danes
Will heartily thank us no doubt for our pains:
If we do not buy the poor creatures, they will,
And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.

If foreigners, likewise, would give up the trade,
Much more in behalf of your wish might be said;
But, while they get riches by purchasing blacks,
Pray tell me why we may not also go snacks!

Your scruples and arguments bring to my mind
A story so pat, you may think it is coined,
On purpose to answer you out of my mint;
But I can assure you I saw it in print.

A youngster at school, more sedate than the rest,
Had once his integrity put to the test;

His comrades had plotted an orchard to rob,
And asked him to go and assist in the job.

He was shocked, sir, like you, and answered—"Oh no!
What! rob our good neighbour! I pray you, don't go;
Besides, the man's poor, his orchard's his bread,
Then think of his children, for they must be fed."

You speak very fine, and you look very grave,
But apples we want, and apples we'll have;
If you will go with us, you shall have a share,
If not, you shall have neither apple nor pear."

They spoke, and Tom pondered—"I see they will go:
Poor man! what a pity to injure him so!
Poor man! I would save him his fruit if I could,
But staying behind will do him no good.

"If the matter depended alone upon me,
His apples might hang till they dropped from the tree;
But since they will take them, I think I'll go too,
He will lose none by me, though I get a few."

His scruples thus silenced, Tom felt more at ease,
And went with his comrades the apples to seize;
He blamed and protested, but joined in the plan;
He shared in the plunder, but pitied the man.

THE MORNING DREAM.

'Twas in the glad season of spring,
Asleep at the dawn of the day,
I dreamed what I cannot but sing,
So pleasant it seemed as I lay.
I dreamed that, on ocean afloat,
Far hence to the westward I sailed,
While the billows high lifted the boat,
And the fresh blowing breeze never failed.

In the steerage a woman I saw,
Such, at least, was the form that she wore,
Whose beauty impressed me with awe,
Ne'er taught me by woman before.
She sat, and a shield at her side
Shed light, like a sun, on the waves,
And, smiling divinely, she cried—
"I go to make freemen of slaves."

Then, raising her voice to a strain
The sweetest that ear ever heard,
She sung of the slave's broken chain,
Wherever her glory appeared.
Some clouds which had over us hung,
Fled, chased by her melody clear,
And methought while she liberty sung,
'Twas liberty only to hear.

Thus swiftly dividing the flood,
To a slave-cultured island we came,
Where a demon, her enemy, stood—
Oppression his terrible name.
In his hand, as the sign of his sway,
A scourge hung with lashes he bore,
And stood looking out for his prey
From Africa's sorrowful shore.

But soon as approaching the land,
That goddess-like woman he viewed,
The scourge he let fall from his hand,
With blood of his subjects imbrued.
I saw him both sicken and die;
And the moment the monster expired,
Heard shouts that ascended the sky,
From thousands with rapture inspired.

Awaking, how could I but muse
At what such a dream should betide?

But soon my ear caught the glad news,
 Which served my weak thought for a guide,
 That Britannia, renowned o'er the waves
 For the hatred she ever has shown
 To the black-sceptred rulers of slaves,
 Resolves to have none of her own.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN,

Showing how he went farther than he intended, and came safe home again,

JOHN GILPIN was a citizen
 Of credit and renown,
 A trainband captain eke was he
 Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear ;
 Though wedded we have been
 These twice ten tedious years, yet we
 No holiday have seen.

To-morrow is our wedding-day,
 And we will then repair
 Unto the Bell at Edmonton,
 All in a chaise and pair.

My sister, and my sister's child,
 Myself, and children three,
 Will fill the chaise ; so you must ride
 On horseback after we.

He soon replied, I do admire
 Of womankind but one,
 And you are she, my dearest dear,
 Therefore it shall be done.

I am a linen-draper bold,
 As all the world doth know,

And my good friend the calender
Will lend his horse to go.

Quoth Mrs Gilpin, That's well said ;
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furnished with our own,
Which is both bright and clear.

John Gilpin kissed his loving wife ;
O'erjoyed was he to find,
That, though on pleasure she was bent,
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,
But yet was not allowed
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off the chaise was stayed,
Where they did all get in ;
Six precious souls, and all agog
To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,
Were never folk so glad,
The stones did rattle underneath,
As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin, at his horse's side,
Seized fast the flowing mane,
And up he got, in haste to ride,
But soon came down again ;

For saddletree scarce reached had he,
His journey to begin,
When, turning round his head, he saw
Three customers come in.

So down he came ; for loss of time,
Although it grieved him sore,

Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,
Would trouble him much more.

'Twas long before the customers
Were suited to their mind,
When Betty, screaming, came down stairs,
The wine is left behind !

Good lack ! quoth he—yet bring it me,
My leathern belt likewise,
In which I bear my trusty sword
When I do exercise.

Now Mistress Gilpin (careful soul !)
Had two stone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that she loved,
And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he drew,
And hung a bottle on each side,
To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be
Equipped from top to toe,
His long red cloak, well brushed and neat,
He manfully did throw.

Now see him mounted once again
Upon his nimble steed,
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,
With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother road
Beneath his well-shod feet,
The snorting beast began to trot,
Which galled him in his seat.

So, fair and softly, John he cried,
But John he cried in vain ;

That trot became a gallop soon,
In spite of curb and rein.

So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright,
He grasped the mane with both his hands,
And eke with all his might.

His horse, who never in that sort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had got,
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought ;
Away went hat and wig ;
He little dreamt, when he set out,
Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
Like streamer long and gay,
Till, loop and button failing both,
At last it flew away.

Then might all people well discern
The bottles he had slung ;
A bottle swinging at each side,
As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children screamed,
Up flew the windows all ;
And every soul cried out, Well done !
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he ?
His fame soon spread around,
He carries weight ! he rides a race !
'Tis for a thousand pound !

And still, as fast as he drew near,
'Twas wonderful to view,

How in a trice the turnpike men
Their gates wide open threw.

And now as he went bowing down,
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were shattered at a blow

Down ran the wine into the road,
Most piteous to be seen,
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke
As they had basted been.

But still he seemed to carry weight,
With leathern girdle braced ;
For all might see the bottle necks
Still dangling at his waist.

Thus all through merry Islington,
These gambols he did play,
Until he came unto the Wash
Of Edmonton so gay ;

And there he threw the wash about
On both sides of the way,
Just like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild goose at play.

At Edmonton, his loving wife
From the balcony spied
Her tender husband, wondering much
To see how he did ride.

Stop, stop, John Gilpin !—Here's the house,
They all at once did cry ;
The dinner waits, and we are tired :
Said Gilpin—so am I !

But yet his horse was not a whit
Inclined to tarry there ;

For why?—his owner had a house
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,
Shot by an archer strong;
So did he fly—which brings me to
The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin out of breath,
And sore against his will,
Till at his friend the calender's,
His horse at last stood still.

The calender, amazed to see
His neighbour in such trim,
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,
And thus accosted him.

What news? what news? your tidings tell?
Tell me, you must and shall—
Say, why bareheaded you are come,
Or why you come at all?

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,
And loved a timely joke;
And thus unto the calender
In merry guise he spoke:

I came because your horse would come;
And, if I well forebode,
My hat and wig will soon be here,
They are upon the road.

The calender, right glad to find
His friend in merry pin,
Returned him not a single word,
But to the house went in;

Whence straight he came with hat and wig;
A wig that flowed behind,

A hat not much the worse for wear,
Each comely in its kind.

He held them up, and in his turn
Thus showed his ready wit—
My head is twice as big as yours,
They therefore needs must fit.

But let me scrape the dirt away
That hangs upon your face ;
And stop and eat, for well you may
Be in a hungry case.

Said John, it is my wedding-day,
And all the world would stare
If wife should dine at Edmonton,
And I should dine at Ware.

So, turning to his horse, he said,
I am in haste to dine ;
'Twas for your pleasure you came here,
You shall go back for mine.

Ah, luckless speech, and bootless boast !
For which he paid full dear :
For while he spake, a braying ass
Did sing most loud and clear ;

Whereat his horse did snort, as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And galloped off with all his might,
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig :
He lost them sooner than at first,
For why ?—they were too big.

Now Mistress Gilpin, when she saw
Her husband posting down

Into the country far away,
She pulled out half-a-crown ;

And thus unto the youth she said,
That drove them to the Bell,
This shall be yours when you bring back
My husband safe and well.

The youth did ride, and soon did meet
John coming back amain ;
Whom in a trice he tried to stop,
By catching at his rein ;

But not performing what he meant,
And gladly would have done,
The frightened steed he frightened more,
And made him faster run.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went postboy at his heels,
The postboy's horse right glad to miss
The lumbering of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road,
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
With postboy scampering in the rear,
They raised the hue and cry :

Stop thief! stop thief!—a highwayman!
Not one of them was mute ;
And all and each that passed that way
Did join in the pursuit.

And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space ;
The toll-man thinking, as before,
That Gilpin rode a race.

And so he did, and won it too,
For he got first to town ;

Nor stopped, till where he had got up
He did again get down.

Now let us sing, long live the king,
And Gilpin, long live he ;
And when he next doth ride abroad,
May I be there to see !

THE NIGHTINGALE AND GLOW-WORM.

A NIGHTINGALE, that all day long
Had cheered the village with his song,
Nor yet at eve his note suspended,
Nor yet when eventide was ended,
Began to feel, as well he might,
The keen demands of appetite ;
When, looking eagerly around,
He spied far off, upon the ground,
A something shining in the dark,
And knew the glow-worm by his spark ;
So stooping down from hawthorn top,
He thought to put him in his crop.
The worm, aware of his intent,
Harangued him thus, right eloquent :
Did you admire my lamp, quoth he,
As much as I your minstrelsy,
You would abhor to do me wrong
As much as I to spoil your song ;
For 'twas the selfsame Power Divine
Taught you to sing, and me to shine ;
That you with music, I with light,
Might beautify and cheer the night.
The songster heard his short oration,
And warbling out his approbation,
Released him, as my story tells,
And found a supper somewhere else.

Hence jarring sectaries may learn
Their real interest to discern ;
That brother should not war with brother,
And worry and devour each other ;
But sing and shine by sweet consent,
Till life's poor transient night is spent,
Respecting in each other's case
The gifts of nature and of grace.

Those Christians best deserve the name
Who studiously make peace their aim ;
Peace, both the duty and the prize
Of him that creeps and him that flies.

AN EPISTLE TO AN AFFLICTED PROTESTANT
LADY IN FRANCE.

MADAM,

A STRANGER's purpose in these lays,
Is to congratulate, and not to praise.
To give the creature the Creator's due,
Were sin in me, and an offence to you.
From man to man, or e'en to woman paid,
Praise is the medium of a knavish trade,
A coin by craft for folly's use designed,
Spurious, and only current with the blind.

The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown ;
No traveller ever reached that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briars in his road.
The world may dance along the flowery plain,
Cheered as they go by many a sprightly strain,
Where nature has her mossy velvet spread,
With unshod feet they yet securely tread,
Admonished, scorn the caution and the friend,
Bent all on pleasure, heedless of its end.

But He, who knew what human hearts would prove—
How slow to learn the dictates of His love,
That, hard by nature and of stubborn will,
A life of ease would make them harder still,
In pity to the souls His grace designed
To rescue from the ruins of mankind,
Called for a cloud to darken all their years,
And said, Go, spend them in the vale of tears.”
O balmy gales of soul-reviving air!
O salutary streams, that murmur there!
These flowing from the fount of grace above,
Those breathed from lips of everlasting love.
The flinty soil, indeed, their feet annoys:
Chill blasts of trouble nip their springing joys;
An envious world will interpose its frown,
To mar delights superior to its own;
And many a pang, experienced still within,
Reminds them of their hated inmate, sin:
But ills of every shape and every name,
Transformed to blessings, miss their cruel aim;
And every moment's calm, that soothes the breast,
Is given in earnest of eternal rest.

Ah, be not sad, although thy lot be cast
Far from the flock, and in a boundless waste!
No shepherds' tents within thy view appear,
But the chief Shepherd even there is near;
Thy tender sorrows and thy plaintive strain
Flow in a foreign land, but not in vain;
Thy tears all issue from a source divine,
And every drop bespeaks a Saviour thine—
So once in Gideon's fleece the dews were found,
And drought on all the drooping herbs around.

TO THE REV. W. CAWTHORNE UNWIN.

UNWIN, I should but ill repay
The kindness of a friend,
Whose worth deserves as warm a lay
As ever friendship penned,
Thy name omitted in a page,
That would reclaim a vicious age.

A union formed, as mine with thee,
Not rashly, or in sport,
May be as fervent in degree,
And faithful in its sort,
And may as rich in comfort prove,
As that of true fraternal love.

The bud inserted in the rind,
The bud of peach or rose,
Adorns, though differing in its kind,
The stock whereon it grows,
With flower as sweet, or fruit as fair,
As if produced by nature there.

Not rich, I render what I may,
I seize thy name in haste,
And place it in this first essay,
Lest this should prove the last.
'Tis where it should be—in a plan,
That holds in view the good of man.

The poet's lyre, to fix his fame,
Should be the poet's heart;
Affection lights a brighter flame
Than ever blazed by art.
No muses on these lines attend,
I sink the poet in the friend.

AN EPISTLE TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR Joseph—five-and-twenty years ago—
Alas, how time escapes!—'tis even so—
With frequent intercourse, and always sweet,
And always friendly, we were wont to cheat
A tedious hour—and now we never meet!
As some grave gentleman in Terence says
('Twas therefore much the same in ancient days),
Good lack, we know not what to-morrow brings—
Strange fluctuation of all human things!
True. Changes will befall, and friends may part,
But distance only cannot change the heart:
And were I called to prove the assertion true,
One proof should serve—a reference to you.

Whence comes it, then, that in the wane of life,
Though nothing have occurred to kindle strife,
We find the friends we fancied we had won,
Though numerous once, reduced to few or none?
Can gold grow worthless that has stood the touch?
No; gold they seemed, but they were never such.

Horatio's servant once, with bow and cringe,
Swinging the parlour-door upon its hinge,
Dreading a negative, and overawed
Lest he should trespass, begged to go abroad.
Go, fellow!—whither?—turning short about—
Nay—stay at home—you're always going out.
'Tis but a step, sir, just at the street's end.—
For what?—An please you, sir, to see a friend.—
A friend! Horatio cried, and seemed to start—
Yea, marry shalt thou, and with all my heart.
And fetch my cloak; for, though the night be raw,
I'll see him too—the first I ever saw.

I knew the man, and knew his nature mild,
And was his plaything often when a child;

But somewhat at that moment pinched him close,
Else he was seldom bitter or morose.
Perhaps his confidence just then betrayed,
His grief might prompt him with the speech he made;
Perhaps 'twas mere good humour gave it birth,
The harmless play of pleasantry and mirth.
Howe'er it was, his language, in my mind,
Bespoke at least a man that knew mankind.

But not to moralise too much, and strain
To prove an evil of which all complain
(I hate long arguments verbosely spun);
One story more, dear Hill, and I have done
Once on a time, an emperor, a wise man,
No matter where, in China or Japan,
Decreed that whosoever should offend
Against the well-known duties of a friend,
Convicted once, should ever after wear
But half a coat, and show his bosom bare:
The punishment importing this, no doubt,
That all was naught within, and all found out.

Oh, happy Britain! we have not to fear
Such hard and arbitrary measure here;
Else, could a law like that which I relate
Once have the sanction of our triple state,
Some few, that I have known in days of old,
Would run most dreadful risk of catching cold;
While you, my friend, whatever wind should blow,
Might traverse England safely to and fro,
An honest man, close buttoned to the chin,
Broad cloth without, and a warm heart within.

TO THE REVEREND MR. NEWTON.

AN INVITATION INTO THE COUNTRY.

The swallows in their torpid state
Compose their useless wing,
And bees in hives as idly wait
The call of early Spring.

The keenest frost that binds the stream,
The wildest wind that blows,
Are neither felt nor feared by them,
Secure of their repose.

But man, all feeling and awake,
The gloomy scene surveys ;
With present ills his hear' must ache,
And pant for brighter days.

Old Winter halting o'er the mead,
Bids me and Mary mourn ;
But lovely Spring peeps o'er his head,
And whispers your return.

Then April, with her sister May,
Shall chase him from the bowers,
And weave fresh garlands every day
To crown the smiling hours.

And if a tear, that speaks regret
Of happier times, appear,
A glimpse of joy, that we have met,
Shall shine and dry the tear.

CATHARINA,

ADDRESSED TO MISS STAPLETON,

(NOW MRS. COURTNEY.)

SHE came—she is gone—we have met—
And meet perhaps never again ;
The sun of that moment is set,
And seems to have risen in vain.
Catharina has fled like a dream—
(So vanishes pleasure, alas !)

But has left a regret and esteem
That will not so suddenly pass.

The last evening ramble we made,
Catharina, Maria, and I,
Our progress was often delayed
By the nightingale warbling nigh.
We paused under many a tree,
And much she was charmed with a tone,
Less sweet to Maria and me,
Who so lately had witnessed her own.

My numbers that day she had sung,
And gave them a grace so divine,
As only her musical tongue
Could infuse into numbers of mine.
The longer I heard, I esteemed
The work of my fancy the more,
And e'en to myself never seemed
So tuneful a poet before.

Though the pleasures of London exceed
In number the days of the year,
Catharina, did nothing impede,
Would feel herself happier here ;
For the close-woven arches of limes
On the banks of our river, I know,
Are sweeter to her many times
Than aught that the city can show.

So it is when the mind is endued
With a well-judging taste from above,
Then, whether embellished or rude,
'Tis nature alone that we love.
The achievements of art may amuse,
May even our wonder excite,
But groves, hills, and valleys diffuse
A lasting, a sacred delight.



Since, then, in the rural recess
Catharina alone can rejoice,
May it still be her lot to possess
The scene of her sensible choice !
To inhabit a mansion remote
From the clatter of street-pacing steeds,
And by Philomel's annual note
To measure the life that she leads.

With her book, and her voice, and her lyre,
To wing all her moments at home ;
And with scenes that new rapture inspire,
As oft as it suits her to roam ;
She will have just the life she prefers,
With little to hope or to fear,
And ours would be pleasant as hers,
Might we view her enjoying it here.

THE MORALIZER CORRECTED.

A TALE.

A HERMIT (or if chance you hold
That title now too trite and old),
A man, once young, who lived retired
As hermit could have well-desired,
His hours of study closed at last,
And finished his concise repast,
Stoppled his cruise, replaced his book
Within its customary nook,
And, staff in hand, set forth to share
The sober cordial of sweet air,
Like Isaac, with a mind applied
To serious thought at eveningtide.
Autumnal rains had made it chill,
And from the trees, that fringed his hill,
Shades slanting at the close of day
Chilled more his else delightful way.
Distant a little mile he spied
A western bank's still sunny side,
And right toward the favoured place
Proceeding with his nimblest pace,
In hope to bask a little yet,
Just reached it when the sun was set.

Your hermit, young and jovial sirs !
Learns something from whate'er occurs—
And hence, he said, my mind computes
The real worth of man's pursuits.
His object chosen, wealth or fame,
Or other sublunary game,
Imagination to his view
Presents it decked with every hue
That can seduce him not to spare
His powers of best exertion there,
But youth, health, vigour, to expend
On so desirable an end.
Ere long approach life's evening shades,
The glow that fancy gave it fades ;
And earned too late, it wants the grace
That first engaged him in the chase.
True, answered an angelic guide,
Attendant at the senior's side—
But whether all the time it cost,
To urge the fruitless chase be lost,
Must be decided by the worth
Of that which called his ardour forth.
Trifles pursued, whate'er the event,
Must cause him shame or discontent ;
A vicious object still is worse,
Successful there, he wins a curse ;
But he, whom e'en in life's last stage
Endeavours laudable engage,
Is paid at least in peace of mind,
And sense of having well-designed ;
And if, ere he attain his end,
His sun precipitate descend,
A brighter prize than that he meant
Shall recompense his mere intent.
No virtuous wish can bear a date
Either too early or too late.



THE FAITHFUL BIRD.

THE greenhouse is my summer seat ;
My shrubs displaced from that retreat
 Enjoyed the open air ;
Two goldfinches, whose sprightly song
Had been their mutual solace long,
 Lived happy prisoners there.

They sang as blithe as finches sing
That flutter loose on golden wing,
 And frolic where they list ;
Strangers to liberty, 'tis true,
But that delight they never knew,
 And therefore never missed.

But nature works in every breast,
With force not easily suppressed ;
 And Dick felt some desires,
That, after many an effort vain,
Instructed him at length to gain
 A pass between his wires.

The open windows seemed to invite
The freeman to a farewell flight ;
But Tom was still confined ;
And Dick, although his way was clear,
Was much too generous and sincere
To leave his friend behind.

So, settling on his cage, by play,
And chirp, and kiss, he seemed to say,
You must not live alone.
Nor would he quit that chosen stand,
Till I, with slow and cautious hand,
Returned him to his own.

Oh ye, who never taste the joys
Of friendship, satisfied with noise,
Fandango, ball, and rout !
Blush when I tell you how a bird
A prison with a friend preferred
To liberty without.

THE NEEDLESS ALARM.

A TALE.

THERE is a field, through which I often pass,
Thick overspread with moss and silky grass,
Adjoining close to Kilwick's echoing wood,
Where oft the bitch fox hides her hapless brood,
Reserved to solace many a neighbouring squire,
That he may follow them through brake and brier,
Contusion hazarding of neck or spine,
Which rural gentlemen call sport divine.
A narrow brook, by rushy banks concealed,
Runs in a bottom, and divides the field ;

Oaks intersperse it, that had once a head,
But now wear crests of oven wood instead.
And where the land slopes to its watery bourn,
Wide yawns a gulf beside a ragged thorn ;
Bricks line the sides, but shivered long ago,
And horrid brambles intertwine below ;
A hollow scooped, I judge, in ancient time,
For baking earth, or burning rock to lime.

Not yet the hawthorn bore her berries red,
With which the fieldfare, wintry guest, is fed ;
Nor Autumn yet had brushed from every spray,
With her chill hand, the mellow leaves away ;
But corn was housed, and beans were in the stack,
Now therefore issued forth the spotted pack,
With tails high mounted, ears hung low, and throats
With a whole gamut filled with heavenly notes.
For which, alas ! my destiny severe,
Though ears she gave me two, gave me no ear.

The sun accomplishing his early march,
His lamp now planted on heaven's topmost arch,
When, exercise and air my only aim,
And heedless whether, to that field I came,
Ere yet with ruthless joy the happy hound
Told hill and dale that Reynard's track was found,
Or with the high raised horn's melodious clang
All Kilwick* and all Dingleberry* rang.

Sheep grazed the field ; some with soft bosom pressed
The herb as soft, while nibbling strayed the rest ;
Nor noise was heard but of the hasty brook,
Struggling, detained in many a petty nook.
All seemed so peaceful, that, from them convoyed,
To me their peace by kind contagion spread.

But when the huntsman, with distended cheek,
'Gan make his instrument of music speak,
And from within the wood that crash was heard,
Though not a hound from whom it burst appeared,

* Two woods belonging to John Tarockmorton, Esq.

The sheep recumbent and the sh  ep that grazed,
All huddling into phalanx, stood and gazed,
Admiring, terrified, the novel strain,
Then coursed the field around, and coursed it round
again;

But recollecting, with a sudden thought,
That flight in circles urged advanced them nought,
They gathered close around the old pit's brink,
And thought again—but knew not what to think.

The man to solitude accustomed long,
Perceives in everything that lives a tongue ;
Not animals alone, but shrubs and trees
Have speech for him, and understood with ease ;
After long drought, when rains abundant fall,
He hears the herbs and flowers rejoicing all ;
Knows what the freshness of their hue implies,
How glad they catch the largess of the skies ;
But, with precision nicer still, the mind
He scans of every locomotive kind ;
Birds of all feather, beasts of every name,
That serve mankind, or shun them, wild or tame ;
The looks and gestures of their griefs and fears
Have all articulation in his ears ;
He spells them true by intuition's light,
And needs no glossary to set him right.

This truth premised, was needful as a text,
To win due credence to what follows next.

Awhile they mused ; surveying every face,
Thou hadst supposed them of superior race ;
Their periwigs of wool and fears combined,
Stamped on each countenance such marks of mind,
That sage they seemed, as lawyers o'er a doubt,
Which, puzzling long, at last they puzzle out ;
Or academic tutors, teaching youths,
Sure ne'er to want them, mathematic truths ;
When thus a mutton statelier than the rest,
A ram, the ewes and wethers sad addressed.

Friends ! we have lived too long. I never heard
Sounds such as these, so worthy to be feared.
Could I believe, that winds for ages pent
In earth's dark womb have found at last a vent,
And from their prison-house below arise
With all these hideous howlings to the skies,
I could be much composed, nor should appear,
For such a cause, to feel the slightest fear.
Yourselves have seen, what time the thunders rolled
All night, me resting quiet in the fold.
Or heard we that tremendous bray alone,
I could expound the melancholy tone ;
Should deem it by our old companion made,
The ass ; for he, we know, has lately strayed,
And being lost, perhaps, and wandering wide,
Might be supposed to clamour for a guide.
But ah ! those dreadful yells what soul can hear,
That owns a carcass, and not quake for fear ?
Demons produce them doubtless, brazen clawed,
And fanged with brass, the demons are abroad ;
I hold it therefore wisest and most fit,
That life to save, we leap into the pit.

Him answered then his loving mate and true,
But more discreet than he, a Cambrian ewe :

How ! leap into the pit our life to save ?
To save our life leap all into the grave ?
For can we find it less ? Contemplate first
The depth how awful ! falling there, we burst :
Or should the brambles, interposed, our fall
In part abate, that happiness were small ;
For with a race like theirs no chance I see
Of peace or ease to creatures clad as we.
Meantime, noise kills not. Be it Dapple's bray,
Or be it not, or be it whose it may,
And rush those other sounds, that seem by tongues
Of demons uttered, from whatever lungs,
Sounds are but sounds, and, till the cause appear,
We have at least commodious standing here.

Come fiend, come fury, giant, monster, blast
From earth or hell, we can but plunge at last.

While thus she spake, I fainter heard the peals,
For Reynard, close attended at his heels
By panting dog, tired man, and spattered horse,
Through mere good fortune, took a different course.
The flock grew calm again, and I the road
Following, that led me to my own abode,
Much wondered that the silly sheep had found
Such cause of terror in an empty sound,
So sweet to huntsman, gentleman, and hound.

MORAL.

Beware of desperate steps. The darkest day,
Live till to-morrow, will have passed away.

ROADICEA.

AN ODE.

WHEN the British warrior queen,
Bleeding from the Roman rods,
Sought, with an indignant mien,
Counsel of her country's gods,

Sage beneath the spreading oak
Sat the Druid, hoary chief;
Every burning word he spoke
Full of rage and full of grief.

Princess! if our aged eyes
Weep upon thy matchless wrongs.
'Tis because resentment ties
All the terrors of our tongues.

Rome shall perish—write that word
In the blood that she has spilt;



Perish, hopeless and abhorred,
Deep in ruin as in guilt.

Rome, for empire far renowned,
Tramples on a thousand states;
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground—
Hark! the Gaul is at her gates!

Other Romans shall arise,
Heedless of a soldier's name;
Sounds, not arms, shall win the prize,
Harmony the path to fame.

Then the progeny that springs
From the forests of our land,

Armed with thunder, clad with wings,
Shall a wider world command.

Regions Cæsar never knew
Thy posterity shall sway ;
Where his eagles never flew,
None invincible as they.

Such the bard's prophetic words,
Pregnant with celestial fire,
Bending as he swept the chords
Of his sweet but awful lyre.

She, with all a monarch's pride,
Felt them in her bosom glow :
Rushed to battle, fought, and died ;
Dying, hurled them at the foe.

Ruffians, pitiless as proud,
Heaven awards the vengeance due ;
Empire is on us bestowed,
Shame and ruin wait for you.

HEROISM.

THERE was a time when *Ætna's* silent fire
Slept unperceived, the mountain yet entire ;
When, conscious of no danger from below,
She towered, a cloudcapt pyramid of snow.
No thunder shook with deep intestine sound
The blooming groves that girdled her around.
Her unctuous olives, and her purple vines
(Unfelt the fury of those bursting mines),
The peasant's hope, and not in vain, assured,
In peace upon her sloping sides matured.

When on a day, like that of the last doom,
A conflagration labouring in her womb,
She teemed and heaved with an infernal birth,
That shook the circling seas and solid earth.
Dark and voluminous the vapours rise,
And hang their horrors in the neighbouring skies,
While through the stygian veil, that blots the day,
In dazzling streaks the vivid lightnings play.
But oh ! what muse, and in what powers of song,
Can trace the torrent as it burns along !
Havoc and devastation in the van,

It marches o'er the prostrate works of man—
Vines, olives, herbage, forests disappear,
And all the charms of a Sicilian year.

Revolving seasons, fruitless as they pass,
See it an uninformed and idle mass ;
Without a soil to invite the tiller's care,
Or blade that might redeem it from despair.
Yet time at length (what will not time achieve !)
Clothes it with earth, and bids the produce live.
Once more the spiry myrtle crowns the glade,
And ruminating flocks enjoy the shade.
O bliss precarious, and unsafe retreats !
O charming Paradise of short-lived sweets !
The selfsame gale that wafts the fragrance round,
Brings to the distant ear a sullen sound :
Again the mountain feels the imprisoned foe,
Again pours ruin on the vale below.
Ten thousand swains the wasted scene deplore,
That only future ages can restore.

Ye monarchs, whom the lure of honour draws,
Who write in blood the merits of your cause,
Who strike the blow, then plead your own defence,
Glory your aim, but justice your pretence ;
Behold in *Ætna's* emblematic fire
The mischiefs your ambitious pride inspires !

Fast by the stream that bounds your just domain,
And tells you where ye have a right to reign,

A nation dwells, not envious of your throne,
Studious of peace, their neighbours' and their own.
Ill-fated race! how deeply must they rue
Their only crime, vicinity to you!
The trumpet sounds, your legions swarm abroad,
Through the ripe harvest lies their destined road;
At every step beneath their feet they tread
The life of multitudes, a nation's bread!
Earth seems a garden in its loveliest dress
Before them, and behind a wilderness.
Famine, and Pestilence her first-born son,
Attend to finish what the sword begun;
And echoing praises, such as fiends might earn,
And Folly pays, resound at your return.
A calm succeeds—but plenty, with her train
Of heartfelt joys, succeeds not soon again;
And years of pining indigence must show
What scourges are the gods that rule below.

Yet man, laborious man, by slow degrees
(Such is his thirst of opulence and ease)
Plies all the sinews of industrious toil,
Gleans up the refuse of the general spoil,
Rebuilds the towers that smoked upon the plain,
And the sun gilds the shining spires again.

Increasing commerce and reviving art
Renew the quarrel on the conqueror's part;
And the sad lesson must be learned once more,
That wealth within is ruin at the door.
What are ye, monarchs, laureled heroes, say,
But *Ætnas* of the suffering world ye sway?
Sweet Nature, stripped of her embroidered robe,
Deplores the wasted regions of her globe;
And stands a witness at Truth's awful bar,
To prove you there destroyers as ye are.

O place me in some ~~Heaven~~ Heaven-protected isle,
Where Peace, and Equity, and Freedom smile;
Where no volcano pours his fiery flood,
No crested warrior dips his plume in blood;

Where Power secures what Industry has won ;
Where to succeed is not to be undone ;
A land that distant tyrants hate in vain,
In Britain's isle, beneath a George's reign !

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE
OUT OF NORFOLK,

THE GIFT OF MY COUSIN, ANN BODHAM.

O THAT those lips had language ! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me ;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
" Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away !"
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
Best be the art that can immortalize,
One art that baffles Time's tyrannic claim
To quench it) here shines on me still the same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
O welcome guest, though unexpected here !
Who bidst me honour with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long.
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own ;
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
A momentary dream, that thou art she.

My mother ! when I learned that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed ?
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun ?
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss ;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—

Ah, that maternal smile ! it answers—Yes.
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu !
But was it such ?—It was.—Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more !
Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
What ardently I wished, I long believed,
And, disappointed still, was still deceived.
By expectation every day beguiled,
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrows spent,
I learned at last submission to my lot,
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.
Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nursery floor ;
And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble-coach, and wrapped
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet cap,
'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we called the pastoral house our own.
Shortlived possession ! but the record fair,
That memory keeps of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm, that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid ;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum ;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestowed
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed :



All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and breaks,
That humour interposed too often makes ;
All this still legible in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honours to thee as my numbers may ;
Perhaps a frail immortal, but sincere,
Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here.

Could Time, his flight reversed, restore the hours,
When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flowers,
The violet, the pink, the jessamine,
I pricked them into paper with a pin
(And thou wast happier than myself the while,
Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head and smile),
Could those few pleasant days again appear,
Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here ?

I would not trust my heart—the dear delight
Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might.
But no—what here we call our life is such,
So little to be loved, and thou so much,
That I should ill requite thee to constrain
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast
(The storms all weathered and 'he ocean crossed),
Shoots into port at some well-havened isle,
Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,
There sits quiescent on the floods, that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
While airs impregnated with incense play
Around her, fanning light her streamers gay;
So thou, with sails how swift! hast reached the shore,
"Where tempests never beat nor billows roar;"
And thy loved consort on the dangerous tide
Of life has long since anchored by thy side.
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
Always from port withheld, always distressed—
Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest-tossed,
Sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost,
And day by day some current's thwarting force
Sets me more distant from a prosperous course.
Yet O the thought, that thou are safe, and he!
That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The son of parents passed into the skies.
And now farewell!—Time unrevoked has run
His wonted course, yet what I wished is done.
By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
I seem to have lived my childhood o'er again;
To have renewed the joys that once were mine,
Without the sin of violating thine;

And, while the wings of fancy still are free,
And I can view this mimic show of thee,
Time has but half succeeded in his theft—
Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left.

FRIENDSHIP.

WHAT virtue, or what mental grace,
But men unqualified and base
Will boast it their possession?
Profusion apes the noble part
Of liberality of heart,
And dulness of discretion,

If every polished gem we find
Illuminating heart or mind,
Provoke to imitation;
No wonder friendship does the same,
That jewel of the purest flame,
Or rather constellation.

No knave but boldly will pretend
The requisites that form a friend,
A real and a sound one;
Nor any fool, he would deceive,
But prove as ready to believe,
And dream that he had found one.

Candid, and generous, and just,
Boys care but little whom they trust—
An error soon corrected;
For who but learns in riper years
That man, when smoothest he appears,
Is most to be suspected?

But here again a danger lies,
Lest, having misapplied our eyes,
And taken trash for treasure,

We should unwarily conclude
Friendship a false ideal good,
A mere Utopian pleasure.

An acquisition rather rare
Is yet no subject of despair ;
Nor is it wise complaining,
If either on forbidden ground,
Or where it was not to be found,
We sought without attaining.

No friendship will abide the test
That stands on sordid interest,
Or mean self-love erected ;
Nor such as may awhile subsist
Between the sot and sensualist,
For vicious ends connected.

Who seek a friend should come disposed
To exhibit, in full bloom disclosed,
The graces and the beauties
That form the character he seeks,
For 'tis a union that bespeaks
Reciprocated duties.

Mutual attention is implied,
And equal truth on either side,
And constantly supported :
'Tis senseless arrogance to accuse
Another of sinister views,
Our own as much distorted.

But will sincerity suffice ?
It is indeed above all price,
And must be made the basis ;
But every virtue of the soul
Must constitute the charming whole,
All shining in their places.

A fretful temper will divide
The closest knot that may be tied,
 By ceaseless sharp corrosion :
A temper passionate and fierce
May suddenly your joys disperse
 At one immense explosion.

In vain the talkative unite
In hopes of permanent delight -
 The secret just committed,
Forgetting its important weight,
They drop through mere desire to prate,
 And by themselves outwitted.

How bright soe'er the prospect seems,
All thoughts of friendship are but dreams,
 If envy chance to creep in ;
An envious man, if you succeed,
May prove a dangerous foe indeed,
 But not a friend worth keeping.

As Envy pines at good possessed,
So Jealousy looks forth distressed
 On good that seems approaching ;
And, if success his steps attend,
Discerns a rival in a friend,
 And hates him for encroaching.

Hence authors of illustrious name,
Unless belied by common fame,
 Are sadly prone to quarrel,
To deem the wit a friend displays
A tax upon their own just praise,
 And pluck each other's laurel.

A man renowned for repartee
Will seldom scruple to make free
 With friendship's finest feeling,

Will thrust a dagger at your breast,
And say he wounded you in jest,
By way of balm for healing.

Whoever keeps an open ear
For tattlers, will be sure to hear
The trumpet of contention ;
Aspersions are the babblers' trade,
To listen is to lend him aid,
And rush into dissension.

A friendship that in frequent fits
Of controversial rage emits
The sparks of disputation,
Like hand in hand insurance plates,
Most unavoidably creates
The thought of conflagration.

Some fickle creatures boast a soul
True as a needle to the pole,
Their humour yet so various—
They manifest their whole life through
The needle's deviations too,
Their love is so precarious.

The great and small but rarely meet
On terms of amity complete ;
Plebeians must surrender,
And yield so much to noble folk,
It is combining fire with smoke,
Obscurity with splendour.

Some are so placid and serene
(As Irish bogs are always green),
They sleep secure from waking ;
And are indeed a bog, that bears
Your unparticipated cares
Unmoved and without quaking.

Courtier and patriot cannot mix
Their heterogenous politics
Without an effervescence,
Like that of salts with lemon juice,
Which does not yet like that produce
A friendly coalescence.

Religion should extinguish strife,
And make a calm of human life ;
But friends that chance to differ
On points which God has left at large,
How freely will they meet and charge !
No combatants are stiffer.

To prove at last my main intent,
Needs no expense of argument,
No cutting and contriving—
Seeking a real friend, we seem
To adopt the chymist's golden dream,
With still less hope of thriving.

Sometimes the fault is all our own,
Some blemish in due time made known
By trespass or omission ;
Sometimes occasion brings to light
Our friend's defect, long hid from sight,
And even from suspicion.

Then judge yourself, and prove your man
As circumspectly as you can,
And, having made election,
Beware no negligence of yours,
Such as a friend but ill endures,
Enfeeble his affection.

That secrets are a sacred trust,
That friends should be sincere and just,
That constancy befits them,

Are observations on the case
That savour much of commonplace,
And all the world admits them.

But 'tis not timber, lead, and stone,
An architect requires alone
To finish a fine build'ng—
The palace were but half complete,
If he could possibly forget
The carving and the gilding.

The man that hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves by thumps upon your back
How he esteems your merit,
Is such a friend that one had need
Be very much his friend indeed
To pardon or to bear it.

As similarity of mind,
Or something not to be defined,
First fixes our attention ;
So manners decent and polite,
The same we practised at first sight,
Must save it from declension.

Some act upon this prudent plan,
" Say little, and hear all you can—"
Safe policy, but hateful.
So barren sands imbibe the shower,
But render neither fruit nor flower,
Unpleasant and ungrateful.

The man I trust, if shy to me,
Shall find me as reserved as he ;
No subterfuge or pleading
Shall win my confidence again ;
I will by no means entertain
A spy on my proceeding.

These samples—for alas ! at last
These are but samples, and a taste
Of evils yet unmentioned—
May prove the task, a task indeed,
In which 'tis much if we succeed,
However well-intentioned.

Pursue the search, and you will find
Good sense and knowledge of mankind
To be at least expedient,
And, after summing all the rest,
Religion ruling in the breast
A principal ingredient.

The noblest Friendship ever shown,
The Saviour's history makes known,
Though some have turned and turned it ;
And, whether being crazed or blind,
Or seeking with a biased mind,
Have not, it seems, discerned it.

O Friendship ! if my soul forego
Thy dear delights while here below,
To mortify and grieve me,
May I myself at last appear
Unworthy, base, and insincere,
Or may my friend deceive me !

ON A MISCHIEVOUS BULL,
WHICH THE OWNER OF HIM SOLD AT THE AUTHOR'S
INSTANCE.

Go—thou art all unfit to share
The pleasures of this place
With such as its old tenants are,
Creatures of gentler race.

The squirrel here his hoard provides,
Aware of wintry storms,
And woodpeckers explore the sides
Of rugged oaks for worms.

The sheep here smooths the knotted thorn
With frictions of her fleece ;
And here I wander eve and morn,
Like her, a friend to peace.

Ah !—I could pity thee exiled
From this secure retreat—
I would not lose it to be styled
The happiest of the great.

But thou canst taste no calm delight :
Thy pleasure is to show
Thy magnanimity in fight,
Thy prowess—therefore, go—

I care not whether east or north,
So I no more may find thee ;
The angry muse thus sings thee forth,
And claps the gate behind thee.

ANNUS MEMORABILIS, 1789.

WRITTEN IN COMMEMORATION OF HIS MAJESTY'S HAPPY
RECOVERY.

I RANSACKED, for a theme of song,
Much ancient chronicle, and long ;
I read of bright embattled fields,
Of trophied helmets, spears, and shields,
Of chiefs, whose single arm could boast
Prowess to dissipate a host ;

Through tomes of fable and of dream
I sought an eligible theme,
But none I found, or found them shared
Already by some happier bard.

To modern times, with truth to guide,
My busy search I next applied ;
Here cities won and fleets dispersed
Urged loud a claim to be rehearsed,
Deeds of unperishing renown,
Our fathers' triumphs and our own.

Thus as the bee, from bank to bower,
Assiduous sips at every flower,
But rests on none till that be found
Where most nectareous sweets abound,
So I, from theme to theme displayed
In many a page historic strayed
Siege after siege, fight after fight,
Contemplating with small delight
(For feats of sanguinary hue
Not always glitter in my view),
Till, settling on the current year,
I found the far-sought treasure near.
A theme for poetry divine,
A theme to ennoble even mine,
In memorable Eighty-nine.

The spring of Eighty-nine shall be
An era cherished long by me,
Which joyful I will oft record,
And thankful at my frugal board ;
For then the clouds of Eighty-eight,
That threatened England's trembling state
With loss of what she least could spare,
Her sovereign's tutelary care,
One breath of Heaven, that cried—Restore !
Chased, never to assemble more :
And far the richest crown on earth,
If valued by its wearer's worth,

The symbol of a righteous reign,
Sat fast on George's brows again.

Then peace and joy again possessed
Our Queen's long-agitated breast ;
Such joy and peace as can be known
By sufferers like herself alone,
Who losing, or supposing lost,
The good on earth they valued most,
For that dear sorrow's sake forego
All hope of happiness below,
Then suddenly regain the prize,
And flash thanksgivings to the skies !

O Queen of Albion, queen of isles !
Since all thy tears were changed to smiles,
The eyes, that never saw thee, shin
With joy not unallied to thine,
Transports not chargeable with art
Illume the land's remotest part,
And strangers to the air of courts,
Both in their toils and at their sports,
The happiness of answered prayers,
That gilds thy features, show in theirs.

If they who on thy state attend,
Awe-struck, before thy presence bend,
'Tis but the natural effect
Of grandeur that ensures respect ;
But she is something more than queen,
Who is beloved where never seen.

H Y M N

FOR THE USE OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL AT OLNEY.

HEAR, Lord, the song of praise and prayer,
In heaven thy dwelling-place,
From infants made the public care,
And taught to seek thy face.



Thanks for thy Word, and for thy day,
And grant us, we implore,
Never to waste in sinful play
Thy holy Sabbaths more.

Thanks that we hear,—but O impart
To each desires sincere,
That we may listen with our heart,
And learn as well as hear.

For if vain thoughts the minds engage
Of older far than we,
What hope that, at our heedless age,
Our minds should e'er be free?

Much hope, if thou our spirits take
Under thy gracious sway,
Who canst the wisest wiser make,
And babes as wise as they.

Wisdom and bliss thy Word bestows,
 A sun that ne'er declines,
 And be thy mercies showered on those
 Who placed us where it shines.

INSCRIPTION

FOR THE TOMB OF MR. HAMILTON.

PAUSE here, and think : a monitory rhyme
 Demands one moment of thy fleeting time.
 Consult life's silent clock, thy bounding vein ;
 Seems it to say—"Health here has long to reign ?"
 Hast thou the vigour of thy youth ? an eye
 That beams delight ? a heart untaught to sigh ?
 Yet fear. Youth, oft-times healthful and at ease,
 Anticipates a day it never sees ;
 And many a tomb, like Hamilton's, aloud
 Exclaims, "Prepare thee for an early shroud."

STANZAS

SUBJOINED TO THE YEARLY BILL OF MORTALITY OF THE
 PARISH OF ALL SAINTS, NORTHAMPTON,*
 ANNO DOMINI 1787.

*Pallida Mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,
 Regumque turres.* HORACE.

Pale Death with equal foot strikes wide the door
 Of royal halls and hovels of the poor.

WHILE thirteen moons saw smoothly run
 The Nen's barge-laden wave,
 All these, life's rambling journey done,
 Have found their home, the grave.

* Composed for John Cox, parish-clerk of Northampton.

Was man, frail always, made more frail
Than in foregoing years !
Did famine or did plague prevail,
That so much death appears !

No ; these were vigorous as their sires,
Nor plague nor famine came ;
This annual tribute Death requires,
And never waives his claim.

Like crowded forest trees we stand,
And some are marked to fall ;
The axe will smite at God's command,
And soon shall smite us all.

Green as the bay tree, ever green,
With its new foliage on,
The gay, the thoughtless, have I seen,
I passed—and they were gone.

Read ye that run, the awful truth
With which I charge my page ;
A worm is in the bud of youth,
And at the root of age.

No present health can health insure
For yet an hour to come ;
No medicine, though it oft can cure,
Can always balk the tomb.

And O ! that humble as my lot,
And scorned as is my strain,
These truths, though known, too much forgot,
I may not teach in vain.

So prays your clerk with all his heart,
And, ere he quits his pen,
Begs you for once to take his part,
And answer all—Amen !

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION.

FOR THE YEAR 1788.

Quod adest, memento
Componere sequas. Cætera fluminis
Ritu feruntur. HORACE.

Improve the present hour, for all beside
Is a mere feather on a torrent's tide.

COULD I, from Heaven inspired, as sure presage
To whom the rising year shall prove his last,
As I can number in my punctual page,
And item down the victims of the past,

How each would trembling wait the mournful sheet
On which the press might stamp him next to die;
And, reading here his sentence, how replete
With anxious meaning, Heavenward turn his eye!

Time then would seem more precious than the joys
In which he sports away the treasure now;
And prayer more seasonable than the noise
Of drunkards, or the music-drawing bow.

Then doubtless many a trifle, on the brink
Of this world's hazardous and headlong shore,
Forced to a pause, would feel it good to think,
Told that his setting sun must rise no more.

Ah, self-deceived! Could I prophetic say
Who next is fated, and who next to fall,
The rest might then seem privileged to play;
But, naming none, the Voice now speaks to all.

Observe the dappled foresters, how light
They bound and airy o'er the sunny glade—

One falls—the rest, wide scattered with affright,
Vanish at once into the darkest shade.

Had we their wisdom, should we, often warned,
Still need repeated warnings, and at last,
A thousand awful admonitions scorned,
Die self-accused of life run all to waste !

Sad waste ! for which no after-thrift atones.
The grave admits no cure for guilt or sin ;
Dewdrops may deck the turf that hides the bones,
But tears of godly grief ne'er flow within.

Learn then, ye living ! by the mouths be taught
Of all these sepulchres, instructors true,
That, soon or late, death also is your lot,
And the next opening grave may yawn for you.

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION.

FOR THE YEAR 1789.

—*Placidaque ibi demum morte quievit.*—VIRG.

There calm at length he breathed his soul away.

“O most delightful hour by man
Experienced here below,
The hour that terminates his span,
His folly and his woe !

“Worlds should not bribe me back to tread
Again life's dreary waste,
To see again my day o'erspread
With all the gloomy past.

“My home henceforth is in the skies,
Earth, seas, and sun, adieu !

All heaven unfolded to my eyes,
I have no sight for you."

So spake Aspasio, firm possessed
Of faith's supporting rod,
Then breathed his soul into its rest,
The bosom of his God.

He was a man among the few
Sincere on virtue's side ;
And all his strength from Scripture drew,
To hourly use applied.

That rule he prized, by that he feared,
He hated, hoped, and loved ;
Nor ever frowned, or sad appeared,
But when his heart had roved.

For he was frail as thou or I,
And evil felt within ;
But when he felt it, heaved a sigh,
And loathed the thought of sin.

Such lived Aspasio ; and at last
Called up from earth to heaven,
The gulf of death triumphant passed,
By gales of blessing driven.

His joys be mine, each reader cries,
When my last hour arrives :
They shall be yours, my verse replies,
Such only be your lives.

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION.

FOR THE YEAR 1790

Ne commonentem recta sperne.—BUCHANAN.

Despise not my good counsel.

He who sits from day to day
Where the prisoned lark is hung,
Heedless of his loudest lay,
Hardly knows that he has sung.

Where the watchman in his round
Nightly lifts his voice on high,
None accustomed to the sound,
Wakes the sooner for his cry.

So your verse-man I, and clerk,
Yearly in my song proclaim
Death at hand—yourselves his mark—
And the foe's unerring aim.

Duly at my time I come,
Publishing to all aloud—
Soon the grave must be your home,
And your only suit a shroud.

But the monitory strain,
Oft repeated in your ears,
Seems to sound too much in vain,
Wins no notice, wakes no fears.

Can a truth by all confessed
Of such magnitude and weight,
Grow, by being oft impressed,
Trivial as a parrot's prate?

Pleasure's call attention wins,
 Hear it often as we may;
 Now as ever seems our sins,
 Though committed every day.

Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell—
 These alone, so often heard,
 No more move us than the bell
 When some stranger is interred.

O, then, ere the turf or tomb
 Cover us from every eye,
 Spirit of instruction, come,
 Make us learn that we must die!

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION.

FOR THE YEAR 1792.

Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
 Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
 Subject pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari!—VIRG.

Happy the mortal who hast traced effects
 To their first cause, cast fear beneath his feet,
 And Death and roaring Hell's voracious fires!

THANKLESS for favours from on high,
 Man thinks he fades too soon;
 Though 'tis his privilege to die,
 Would he improve the boon.

But he, not wise enough to scan
 His blest concerns aright,
 Would gladly stretch life's little span
 To ages, if he might.

To ages in a world of pain,
To ages, where he goes
Galled by affliction's heavy chain,
And hopeless of repose.

Strange fondness of the human heart,
Enamoured of its charm !
Strange world, that costs it so much smart,
And still has power to charm.

Whence has the world her magic power ?
Why deem we death a foe ?
Recoil from weary life's best hour,
And covet longer woe ?

The cause is Conscience—Conscience oft
Her tale of guilt renews;
Her voice is terrible, though soft,
And dread of death ensues.

Then anxious to be longer spared,
Man mourns his fleeting breath,
All evils then seem light compared
With the approach of Death.

'Tis judgment shakes him; there's the fear
That prompts the wish to stay;
He has incurred a long arrears,
And must despair to pay.

Pay ! follow Christ, and all is paid;
His death your peace ensures;
Think on the grave where he was laid,
And calm descend to yours.

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION.

FOR THE YEAR 1793.

De sacris autem hæc sit una sententia, ut conserventur.

CIC. DE LEG.

But let us all concur in this one sentiment, that things sacred
be inviolate.

HE lives, who lives to God alone,
And all are dead beside;
For other source than God is none,
Whence life can be supplied.

To live to God is to requite
His love as best we may;
To make his precepts our delight,
His promises our stay.

But life, within a narrow ring
Of giddy joys comprised,
Is falsely named, and no such thing,
But rather death disguised.

Can life in them deserve the name,
Who only live to prove
For what poor toys they can disclaim
An endless life above?

Who, much diseased, yet nothing feel;
Much menaced, nothing dread;
Have wounds which only God can heal,
Yet never ask his aid.

Who deem his house a useless place,
Faith, want of common sense;
And ardour in the Christian race,
A hypocrite's pretence.

Who trample order; and the day
Which God asserts his own
Dishonour with unhallowed play,
And worship chance alone!

If scorn of God's commands, impressed
On word and deed, imply
The better part of man unblessed
With life that cannot die;

Such want it, and that want, uncured
Till man resigns his breath,
Speaks him a criminal, assured
Of everlasting death.

Sad period to a pleasant course!
Yet so will God repay
Sabbaths profaned without remorse,
And mercy cast away.

ON A GOLDFINCH,

STARVED TO DEATH IN HIS CAGE.

TIME was when I was free as air,
The thistle's downy seed my fare,
My drink the morning dew;
I perched at will on every spray,
My form genteel, my plumage gay;
My strains for ever new.

But gaudy plumage, sprightly strain,
And form genteel were all in vain,
And of a transient date;
For, caught and caged, and starved to death,
In dying sighs my little breath
Soon passed the wire grate.

Thanks, gentle swain, for all my woes,
And thanks for this effectual close
And cure of every ill !
More cruelty could none express ;
And I, if you had shown me less,
Had been your prisoner still.

THE PINEAPPLE AND THE BEE.

THE pineapples, in triple row,
Were basking hot, and all in blow ;
A bee of most discerning taste
Perceived the fragrance as he passed,
On eager wing the spoiler came,
And searched for crannies in the frame,
Urged his attempt on every side,
To every pane his trunk applied ;
But still in vain, the frame was tight,
And only pervious to the light :
Thus having wasted half the day,
He trimmed his flight another way.
Methinks, I said, in thee I find
The sin and madness of mankind.
To joys forbidden man aspires,
Consumes his soul with vain desires ;
Folly the spring of his pursuit,
And disappointment all the fruit.
While Cynthio ogles, as she passes,
The nymph between two chariot glasses,
She is the pineapple, and he
The silly unsuccessful bee.
The maid who views with pensive air
The showglass fraught with glittering ware,
Sees watches, bracelets, rings, and locketts,
But sighs at thought of empty pockets ;

Like thine, her appetite is keen,
But ah! the cruel glass between,
Our dear delights are often such,
Exposed to view, but not to touch;
The sight our foolish heart inflames,
We long for pineapples in frames;
With hopeless wish one looks and lingers;
One breaks the glass, and cuts his fingers;
But they whom truth and wisdom lead
Can gather honey from a weed.

HORACE, BOOK II. ODE X.

RECEIVE, dear friend, the truths I teach,
So shalt thou live beyond the reach
Of adverse fortune's power;
Not always tempt the distant deep,
Nor always timorously creep
Along the treacherous shore.

He that holds fast the golden mean,
And lives contentedly between
The little and the great,
Feels not the wants that pinch the poor,
Nor plagues that haunt the rich man's door,
Imbittering all his state.

The tallest pines feel most the power
Of wintry blasts; the loftiest tower
Comes heaviest to the ground;
The bolts that spare the mountain's side
His cloud-capt eminence divide,
And spread the ruin round.

The well-informed philosopher
Rejoices with a wholesome fear,
And hopes in spite of pain;

If Winter bellow from the north,
Soon the sweet Spring comes dancing forth,
And Nature laughs again.

What if thine heaven be overcast,
The dark appearance will not last ;
Expect a brighter sky.
The God that strings the silver bow
Awakes sometimes the Muses too,
And lays his arrows by.

If hindrances obstruct thy way,
Thy magnanimity display,
And let thy strength be seen ;
But O ! if Fortune fill thy sail
With more than a propitious gale,
Take half thy canvass in.

A REFLECTION ON THE FOREGOING ODE.

AND is this all ? Can Reason do no more
Than bid me shun the deep, and dread the shore ?
Sweet moralist ! afloat on life's rough sea,
The Christian has an art unknown to thee :
He holds no parley with unmanly fears ;
Where Duty bids, he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all.

THE LILY AND THE ROSE.

The nymph must lose her female friend,
If more admired than she ;
But where will fierce contention end,
If flowers can disagree ?

Within the garden's peaceful scene
Appeared two lovely foes,
Aspiring to the rank of queen,
The Lily and the Rose.

The Rose soon reddened into rage,
And swelling with disdain,
Appealed to many a poet's page
To prove her right to reign.

The Lily's height bespoke command.
A fair imperial flower ;
She seemed designed for Flora's hand,
The sceptre of her power.

This civil bickering and debate
The goddess chanced to hear,
And flew to save, ere yet too late,
The pride of the parterre ;

Yours is, she said, the nobler hue,
And yours the statelier mien ;
And, till a third surpasses you,
Let each be deemed a queen.

Thus soothed and reconciled, each seeks
The fairest British fair ;
The seat of empire is her cheeks,
They reign united there.

IDEM LATINE REDDITUM.

HEU inimicitias quoties parit æmula forma,
Quam raro pulchræ, pulchra placere potest !
Sed fines ultra solitos discordia tendit,
Cum flores ipsos bilis et ira movent.

Hortus ubi dulces præbet tacitosque recessus,
Se rapit in partes gens animosa duas ;
Hic sibi regales Amaryllis candida cultus,
Illic purpureo vindicat ore Rosa.

Ira Rosam et meritis quæsita superbia tangunt,
Multaque ferventi vix cohibenda sinu,
Dum sibi fautorum ciet undique nomina vatum,
Jusque suum, multo carmine falta, probat.

Altior emicat illa, et celso vertice nutat,
Ceum flores inter non habitura parem,
Fastiditque alios, et nata videtur in usus
Imperii, sceptrum, Flora quod ipsa gerat.

Nec Dea non sensit civilis murmura rixæ,
Cui curæ est pictas pandere ruris opes.
Deliciasque suas nunquam non prompta tueri,
Dum licet et locus est, ut tueatur, adest.

Et tibi forma datur procerior omnibus, inquit,
Et tibi, principibus qui solet esse, color,
Et donec vincat quædam formosior ambas,
Et tibi reginæ nomen, et esto tibi.

His ubi sedatus furor est, petit utraque nympham
Qualem inter Veneres Anglia sola parit ;
Hanc penes imperium est, nihil optant amplius, hujus
Regnant in nitidis, et sine lite, genis.

THE POPLAR FIELD.

THE poplars are felled, farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade ;
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elapsed since I last took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew;
And now in the grass behold they are laid,
And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade.

The blackbird has fled to another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene where his melody charmed me before
Resounds with his sweet flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

'Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man;
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Have a being less durable even than he.*

IDEM LATINE REDDITUM.

POPULÆ cecidit gratissima copia silvæ,
Conticuêre susurri, omnisque evanuit umbra.
Nullæ jam levibus se miscent frondibus auræ,
Et nulla in flur-io ramorum ludit imago.

Hei mihi! bis senos dum luctu torqueor annos,
His cogor silvis suetoque carere recessu,
Cum serò rediens, stratasque in gramine cernens,
Insedî arboribus, sub quæis errare solebam.

* Mr. Cowper afterwards altered this last stanza in the following manner:—

The change both my heart and my fancy employs,
I reflect on the frailty of man and his joys;
Short-lived as we are, yet our pleasures, we see,
Have a still shorter date, and die sooner than we.

Ah ubi nunc merulæ cantus? Felicior illum
 Silva tegit, duræ nondum permissa bipenni;
 Scilicet exustos colles camposque patentes
 Odit, et indignans et non rediturus abivit.

Sed qui succisas doleo succidar et ipse,
 Et priùs huic parilis quàm creverit altera silva
 Flebor, et, exequiis parvis donatus, habebō
 Defixum lapidem tumulique cubantis acervum.

Tam subitò periisse videns tam digna manere,
 Agnosco humanas sortes et tristia fata—
 Sit licèt ipse brevis, volucrique simillimus umbræ,
 Est homini brevior citiùsque obitura voluptas.

V O T U M.

O MATUTINI rores, auræque salubres,
 O nemora, et lætæ rivis felicibus herbæ,
 Graminei colles, et amænæ in vallibus umbræ!
 Fata modò dederint quas olim in rure paterno
 Delicias, procul arte, procul fornidine novi,
 Quam vellem ignotus, quod mens mea semper avebat,
 Ante larem proprium placidam expectaro senectam
 Tum demùm, exactis non infelicitè annis,
 Sortiri tacitum lapidem, aut sub cespite condi!

VERSES WRITTEN AT BATH, ON FINDING THE HEEL OF A SHOE.

FORTUNE! I thank thee, gentle goddess! thanks!
 Not that my muse, though bashful, shall deny
 She would have thanked thee rather hadst thou cast
 A treasure in her way; for neither meed

Of early breakfast, to dispel the fumes,
And bowel-racking pains of emptiness,
Nor noontide feast, nor evening's cool repast,
Hopes she from this—presumptuous, though, perhaps,
The cobbler, leather-carving artist! might.
Nathless she thanks thee, and accepts thy boon,
Whatever; not as erst the fabled cock,
Vainglorious fool! unknowing what he found,
Spurned the rich gem thou gavest him. Wherefore, ah!
Why not on me that favour, (worthier sure!)
Conferrest thou, goddess! Thou art blind, thou sayest!
Enough—thy blindness shall excuse the deed.

Nor does my Muse no benefit exhale
From this thy scant indulgence!—even here
Hints worthy sage philosophy are found;
Illustrious hints, to moralize my song!
This ponderous heel of perforated hide
Compact, with pegs indented, many a row,
Haply (for such its massy form bespeaks)
The weighty tread of some rude peasant clown
Upbore: on this supported oft, he stretched,
With uncouth strides, along the furrowed glebe,
Flattening the stubborn clod, till cruel time
(What will not cruel time?) on a wry step
Severed the strict cohesion; when, alas!
He, who could erst, with even, equal pace,
Pursue his destined way with symmetry,
And some proportion formed, now on one side,
Curtailed and maimed, the sport of vagrant boys,
Cursing his frail supporter, treacherous prop!
With toilsome steps, and difficult, moves on:
Thus fares it oft with other than the feet
Of humble villager—the statesman thus,
Up the steep road where proud ambition leads,
Aspiring, first uninterrupted winds
His prosperous way; nor fears miscarriage foul,
While policy prevails, and friends prove true:
But that support soon failing, by him left,

On whom he most depended, basely left,
 Betrayed, deserted ; from his airy height
 Headlong he falls ; and through the rest of life
 Drags the dull load of disappointment on.

1748.

AN ODE,

ON READING RICHARDSON'S HISTORY OF SIR CHARLES
 GRANDISON.

SAY, ye apostate and profane,
 Wretches, who blush not to disdain
 Allegiance to your God,—
 Did e'er your idly wasted love
 Of virtue for her sake, remove
 And lift you from the crowd ?

Would you the race of glory run ?
 Know, the devout, and they alone,
 Are equal to the task :
 The labours of the illustrious course
 Far other than the unaided force
 Of human vigour ask.

To arm against reputed ill
 The patient heart, too brave to feel
 The tortures of despair :
 Nor safer yet high-crested pride,
 When wealth flows in with every tide
 To gain admittance there.

To rescue from the tyrant's sword
 The oppressed ;—unseen and unimplored,
 To cheer the face of woe ;
 From lawless insult to defend
 An orphan's right—a fallen friend,
 And a forgiven foe ;

These, these distinguish from the crowd,
And these alone, the great and good,
 The guardians of mankind ;
Whose bosoms with these virtues heave,
O, with what matchless speed they leave
 The multitude behind !

Then ask ye, from what cause on earth
Virtues like these derive their birth,
 Derived from Heaven alone ;
Full on that favoured breast they shine,
Where faith and resignation join
 To call the blessing down.

Such is that heart :—but while the Muse
Thy theme, O Richardson, pursues,
 Her feeble spirits faint :
She cannot reach, and would not wrong,
That subject for an angel's song,
 The hero, and the saint !

1748.

AN EPISTLE TO ROBERT LLOYD, ESQ.

'Tis not that I design to rob
Thee of thy birthright, gentle Bob,
For thou art born sole heir and single,
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle ;
Not that I mean, while thus I knit
My threadbare sentiments together,
To show my genius or my wit,
When God and you know I have neither :
Or such as might be better shown
By letting poetry alone.
'Tis not with either of these views
That I presume to address the Muse :

But to divert a fierce banditti,
(Sworn foes to everything that's witty!)
That, with a black, infernal train,
Make cruel inroads in my brain,
And daily threaten to drive thence
My little garrison of sense;
The fierce banditti which I mean
Are gloomy thoughts, led on by spleen.
Then there's another reason yet,
Which is, that I may fairly quit
The debt, which justly became due
The moment when I heard from you:
And you might grumble, crony mine,
If paid in any other coin;
Since twenty sheets of lead, God knows,
(I would say twenty sheets of prose)
Can ne'er be deemed worth half so much
As one of gold, and yours was such.
Thus, the preliminaries settled,
I fairly find myself pitchkettled,*
And cannot see, though few see better,
How I shall hammer out a letter.

First, for a thought—since all agree—
A thought—I have it—let me see—
'Tis gone again—plague on't! I thought
I had it, but I have it not.
Dame Gurton thus and Hodge her son,
That useful thing, her needle, gone!
Rake well the cinders—sweep the floor,
And sift the dust behind the door;
While eager Hodge beholds the prize
In old grimalkin's glaring eyes;
And gammer finds it on her knees
In every shining straw she sees.

* Pitchkettled, a favourite phrase at the time when this Epistle was written, expressive of being puzzled, or what in the Spectator's time would have been called bamboozled.

This simile were apt enough ;
But I've another, critic proof !
The virtuoso thus, at noon,
Broiling beneath a July sun,
The gilded butterfly pursues,
O'er hedge and ditch, through gaps and mews ;
And, after many a vain essay,
To captivate the tempting prey,
Gives him at length the lucky pat,
And has him safe beneath his hat :
Then lifts it gently from the ground ;
But ah ! 'tis lost as soon as found ;
Culprit his liberty regains,
Flits out of sight, and mocks his pains.
The sense was dark ; 'twas therefore fit
With simile to illustrate it ;
But as too much obscures the sight,
As often as too little light,
We have our similes cut short,
For matters of more grave import.
That Matthew's numbers run with ease,
Each man of common sense agrees :
All men of common sense allow
That Robert's lines are easy too :
Where then the preference shall we place,
Or how do justice in this case ?
Matthew (says Fame) with endless pains
Smoothed and refined the meanest strains ;
Nor suffered one ill-chosen rhyme
To escape him at the idlest time ;
And thus o'er all a lustre cast,
That while the language lives shall last.
An't please your ladyship (quoth I),
For 'tis my business to reply ;
Sure so much labour, so much toil,
Bespeak at least a stubborn soil :
Theirs be the laurel-wreath, decreed,
Who both write well, and write full speed !

Who throw their Helicon about
 As freely as a conduit spout !
 Friend Robert, thus like chien scavant,
 Lets fall a poem en passant,
 Nor needs his genuine ore refine,
 'Tis ready polished from the mine.

1754.

THE FIFTH SATIRE OF THE FIRST BOOK OF
 HORACE.

A HUMOROUS DESCRIPTION OF THE AUTHOR'S JOURNEY
 FROM ROME TO BRUNDISIUM.

'Twas a long journey lay before us,
 When I and honest Heliodorus,
 Who far in point of rhetoric
 Surpasses every living Greek,
 Each leaving our respective home,
 Together sallied forth from Rome.
 First at Aricia we alight,
 And there refresh, and pass the night,
 Our entertainment rather coarse
 Than sumptuous, but I've met with worse.
 Thence o'er the causeway, soft and fair,
 To Appiiforum we repair.
 But as this road is well supplied
 (Temptation strong !) on either side
 With inns commodious, snug, and warm,
 We split the journey, and perform
 In two days' time what's often done
 By brisker travellers in one.
 Here, rather choosing not to sup,
 Than with bad water mix my cup,

After a warm debate, in spite
Of a provoking appetite,
I sturdily resolved at last
To balk it, and pronounce a fast,
And in a moody humour wait,
While my less dainty comrades bait.

Now o'er the spangled hemisphere
Diffused, the starry train appear,
When there arose a desperate brawl ;
The slaves and bargemen, one and all,
Rending their throats (have mercy on us)
As if they were resolved to stun us.
"Steer the barge this way to the shore ;
I tell you we'll admit no more ;
Plague ! will you never be content ?"
Thus a whole hour at least is spent,
While they receive the several fares,
And kick the mule into his gears.
Happy, these difficulties past,
Could we have fallen asleep at last !
But, what with humming, croaking, biting,
Gnats, frogs, and all their plagues uniting,
These tuneful natives of the lake
Conspired to keep us broad awake.
Besides, to make the concert full,
Two maudlin wights, exceeding dull,
The bargeman and a passenger,
Each in his turn, essayed an air
In honour of his absent fair.
At length the passenger, opprest
With wine, left off, and snored the rest.
The weary bargeman too gave o'er,
And hearing his companion snore,
Seized the occasion, fixed the barge,
Turned out his mule to graze at large,
And slept forgetful of his charge.
And now the sun, o'er eastern hill,
Discovered that our barge stood still !

When one, whose anger vexed him sore,
With malice fraught, leaps quick on shore;
Plucks up a stake, with many a thwack
Assails the mule and driver's back.

Then slowly moving on with pain,
At ten Feronia's stream we gain,
And in her pure and glassy wave
Our hands and faces gladly lave.
Climbing three miles, fair Anxur's height
We reach, with stony quarries white.
While here, as was agreed, we wait,
Till, charged with business of the state,
Mæccenas and Cocceius come,
The messengers of peace from Rome.
My eyes, by watery humours blear
And sore, I with black balsam smear.
At length they join us, and with them
Our worthy friend Fonteius came;
A man of such complete desert,
Antony loved him at his heart.
At Fundi we refused to bait,
And laughed at vain Aufidius' state,
A prætor now, a scribe before,
The purple-bordered robe he wore,
His slave the smoking censer bore.
Tired, at Muræna's we repose,
At Formia sup at Capito's.

With smiles the rising morn we greet,
At Sinuessa pleased to meet
With Plotius, Varius, and the bard
Whom Mantua first with wonder heard.
The world no purer spirits knows;
For none my heart more warmly glows.
O! what embraces we bestowed,
And with what joy our breasts o'erflowed!
Sure, while my senso is sound and clear,
Long as I live, I shall prefer

A gay, good-natured, easy friend,
To every blessing Heaven can send.
At a small village the next night
Near the Vulturnus we alight ;
Where, as employed on state affairs,
We were supplied by the purveyors
Frankly at once, and without hire,
With food for man and horse, and fire.
Capua next day betimes we reach,
Where Virgil and myself, who each
Laboured with different maladies,
His such a stomach, mine such eyes,
As would not bear strong exercise,
In drowsy mood to sleep resort ;
Mæcenas to the tennis-court.
Next at Cocceius' farm were treated,
Above the Caudian tavern seated ;
His kind and hospitable board
With choice of wholesome food was stored.

Now, O ye Nine, inspire my lays !
To nobler themes my fancy raise !
Two combatants, who scorn to yield
The noisy, tongue-disputed field,
Sarmentus and Cicirrus, claim
A poet's tribute to their fame ;
Cicirrus of true Oscian breed,
Sarmentus who was never freed,
But ran away. We don't defame him ;
His lady lives, and still may claim him.
Thus dignified, in harder fray
These champions their keen wit display,
And first Sarmentus led the way.
"Thy locks," quoth he, "so rough and coarse,
Look like the mane of some wild horse."
We laugh : Cicirrus undismayed—
"Have at you !"—cries, and shakes his head.
"Tis well," Sarmentus says, "you've lost
That horn your forehead once could boast ;

Nor can I deem their spleen the cause,
 Why fickle Nature breaks her laws.
 Brundusium last we reach: and there
 Stop short the Muse and traveller.

1759.

THE NINTH SATIRE OF THE FIRST BOOK OF HORACE.

DESCRIPTION OF AN IMPERTINENT. ADAPTED TO THE
 PRESENT TIME, 1759.

SAUNTERING along the street one day,
 On trifles musing by the way—
 Up steps a free familiar wight
 (I scarcely knew the man by sight).
 “Carlos,” he cried, “your hand, my dear,
 Gad, I rejoice to meet you here!
 Pray heaven I see you well!” “So, so;
 E’en well enough as times now go.
 The same good wishes, sir, to you.”
 Finding he still pursued me close—
 “Sir, you have business I suppose.”
 “My business, sir, is quickly done,
 ’Tis but to make my merit known.
 Sir, I have read”—“O learned sir,
 You and your learning I revere.”
 Then sweating with anxiety,
 And sadly longing to get free,
 Gods, how I scampered, scuffled for’t,
 Ran, halted, ran again, stopped short,
 Beckoned my boy, and pulled him near
 And whispered nothing in his ear.

Teased with his loose unjointed chat—
 “What street is this? What house is that?”
 O Harlow, how I envied thee
 Thy unabashed effrontery,

Who dar'st a foe with freedom blame,
And call a coxcomb by his name !
When I returned him answer none,
Obligingly the fool ran on,
" I see you're dismally distressed,
Would give the world to be released.
But by your leave, sir, I shall still
Stick to your skirts, do what you will.
Pray what way does your journey tend !"
" O, 'tis a tedious way, my friend ;
Across the Thames, the Lord knows where,
I would not trouble you so far."
" Well, I'm at leisure to attend you."
" Are you ?" thought I, " the de'il befriend you."
No ass with double panniers racked,
Oppressed, o'erladen, broken-backed,
E'er looked a thousandth part so dull
As I, nor half so like a fool.
" Sir, I know little of myself
(Proceeds the pert conceited elf),
If Gray or Mason you will deem
Than me more worthy your esteem.
Poems I write by folios
As fast as other men write prose :
Then I can sing so loud, so clear,
That Beard cannot with me compare.
In dancing too I all surpass,
Not Cooke can move with such a grace."
Here I made shift with much ado
To interpose a word or two.—
" Have you no parents, sir, no friends,
Whose welfare on your own depends ?"
" Parents, relations, say you ? No.
They're all disposed of long ago."
" Happy to be no more perplexed !
My fate too threatens, I go next.
Despatch me, sir, 'tis now too late,
Alas ! to struggle with my fate !

Well, I'm convinced my time is come—
When young, a gipsy told my doom.
The beldame shook her palsied head,
As she perused my palm, and said :
Of poison, pestilence, or war,
Gout, stone, defluction, or catarrh,
You have no reason to beware.
Beware the coxcomb's idle prate ;
Chiefly, my son, beware of that.
Be sure, when you behold him, fly
Out of all earshot, or you die."

To Rufus' Hall we now draw near !
Where he was summoned to appear,
Refute the charge the plaintiff brought,
Or suffer judgment by default.
"For heaven's sake, if you love me, wait
One moment ! I'll be with you straight."
Glad of a plausible pretence—
"Sir, I must beg you to dispense
With my attendance in the court.
My legs will surely suffer for't."
"Nay, pray thee, Carlos, stop awhile !"
"Faith, sir, in law I have no skill.
Besides, I have no time to spare,
I must be going you know where."
"Well, I protest, I'm doubtful now
Whether to leave my suit or you !"
"Me without scruple !" I reply,
"Me by all means, sir !"—"No, not I.
Allons, Monsieur !" 'Twere vain, you know,
To strive with a victorious foe.
So I reluctantly obey,
And follow where he leads the way.

"You and Newcastle are so close,
Still hand and glove, sir—I suppose."
"Newcastle, let me tell you, sir,
Has not his equal everywhere."

"Well. There indeed your fortune's made.
Faith, sir, you understand your trade.
Would you but give me your good word :
Just introduce me to my lord,
I should serve charmingly by way
Of second fiddle, as they say :
What think you, sir! 'twere a good jest.
'Slife, we should quickly scout the rest."
"Sir, you mistake the matter far,
We have no second fiddles there—
Richer than I some folks may be ;
More learned, but it hurts not me.
Friends though he has of different kind,
Each has his proper place assigned."
"Strange matters these alleged by you !"
"Strange they may be, but they are true"
"Well, then, I vow, 'tis mighty clever,
Now I long ten times more than ever
To be advanced extremely near
One of his shining character.
Have but the will—there wants no more,
'Tis plain enough you have the power.
His easy temper (that's the worst)
He knows, and is so shy at first.—
But such a cavalier as you—
Lord, sir, you'll quickly bring him to !—
Well! if I fail in my design,
Sir, it shall be no fault of mine.
If by the saucy servile tribe
Denied, what think you of a bribe !
Shut out to-day, not die with sorrow,
But try my luck again to-morrow.
Never attempt to visit him
But at the most convenient time,
Attend him on each levee day,
And there my humble duty pay,
Labour like this our want's supplies ;
And they must stoop who mean to rise."

While thus he wittingly harangued,
For which you'll guess I wished him hanged,
Campley, a friend of mine, came by,
Who knew his humour more than I.
We stop, salute, and—"Why so fast,
Friend Carlos? What'er all this haste?"
Fired at the thoughts of a reprieve,
I pinch him, pull him, twitch his sleeve,
Nod, beckon, bite my lips, wink, pout,
Do everything but speak plain out!
While he, sad dog, from the beginning
Determined to mistake my meaning,
Instead of pitying my curse,
By jeering made it ten times worse.
"Campley, what secret (pray!) was that
You wanted to communicate?"
"I recollect. But 'tis no matter.
Carlos, we'll talk of that hereafter.
E'en let the secret rest. 'Twill tell
Another time, sir, just as well."

Was ever such a dismal day?
Unlucky cur, he steals away,
And leaves me, half bereft of life,
At mercy of the butcher's knife;
When sudden, shouting from afar,
See his antagonist appear!
The bailiff seized him, quick as thought,
"Ho, Mr. Scoundrel! Are you caught!
Sir, you are witness to the arrest."
"Ay, marry, sir, I'll do my best."
The mob huzzas. Away they trudge,
Culprit and all, before the judge.
Meanwhile I luckily enough
(Thanks to Apollo) got clear off.

A TALE, FOUNDED ON A FACT,

WHICH HAPPENED IN JANUARY 1779.

WHERE Humber pours his rich commercial stream,
There dwelt a wretch, who breathed but to blaspheme;
In subterraneous caves his life he led,
Black as the mine in which he wrought for bread.
When on a day, emerging from the deep,
(A Sabbath-day (such Sabbaths thousands keep!))
The wages of his weekly toil he bore
To buy a cock—whose blood might win him more;
As if the noblest of the feathered kind
Were but for battle and for death designed;
As if the consecrated hours were meant
For sport, to minds on cruelty intent,
It chanced (such chances Providence obey)
He met a fellow-labourer on the way,
Whose heart the same desires had once inflamed;
But now the savage temper was reclaimed.
Persuasion on his lips had taken place;
For all plead well who plead the cause of grace.
His iron heart with Scripture he assailed,
Woody him to hear a sermon, and prevailed.
His faithful bow the mighty preacher drew,
Swift as the lightning-glimpse the arrow flew.
He wept; he trembled; cast his eyes around
To find a worse than he; but none he found.
He felt his sins, and wondered he should feel.
Grace made the wound, and grace alone could heal.

Now farewell oaths, and blasphemies, and lies!
He quits the sinner's for the martyr's prize.
That holy day was washed with many a tear,
Gilded with hope, yet shaded too by fear.
The next his swarthy brethren of the mine
Learned, by his altered speech, the change divine!

Laughed when they should have wept, and swore the day
Was nigh when he would swear as fast as they.
"No," said the penitent, "such words shall share
This breath no more—devoted now to prayer.
O! if Thou seest (Thine eye the future sees)
That I shall yet again blaspheme, like these;
Now strike me to the ground on which I kneel,
Ere yet this heart relapses into steel;
Now take me to that heaven I once defied,
Thy presence, thy embrace!"—He spoke, and died!

TO THE REV. MR. NEWTON, ON HIS RETURN
FROM RAMSGATE.

THAT ocean you have late surveyed,
Those rocks I too have seen,
But I afflicted and dismayed,
You tranquil and serene.

You from the flood-controlling steep
Saw stretched before your view,
With conscious joy, the threatening deep,
No longer such to you.

To me the waves, that ceaseless broke
Upon the dangerous coast,
Hoarsely and ominously spoke
Of all my treasure lost.

Your sea of troubles you have past,
And found the peaceful shore;
I, tempest-tossed, and wrecked at last,
Come home to port no more.

Oct. 1780.

LOVE ABUSED.

WHAT is there in the vale of life
Half so delightful as a wife,
When friendship, love, and peace combine
To stamp the marriage bond divine?
The stream of pure and genuine love
Derives its current from above;
And earth a second Eden shows,
Where'er the healing water flows:
But ah! if from the dykes and drains
Of sensual nature's feverish veins,
Lust, like a lawless headstrong flood,
Impregnated with ooze and mud,
Descending fast on every side,
Once mingles with the sacred tide,
Farewell the soul-enlivening scene!
The banks that wore a smiling green,
With rank defilement overspread,
Bewail their flowery beauties dead.
The stream polluted, dark, and dull,
Diffused into a Stygian pool,
Through life's last melancholy years
Is fed with overflowing tears:
Complaints supply the zephyr's part,
And sighs that heave a breaking heart.

A POETICAL EPISTLE TO LADY AUSTEN.

DEAR ANNA—between friend and friend
Prose answers every common end;
Serves in a plain and homely way,
To express the occurrence of the day;
Our health, the weather, and the news!
What walks we take, what books we choose;

And all the floating thoughts we find
Upon the surface of the mind.

But when a poet takes the pen,
Far more alive than other men,
He feels a gentle tingling come
Down to his finger and his thumb,
Derived from nature's noblest part,
The centre of a glowing heart :
And this is what the world, who knows
No flights above the pitch of prose,
His more sublime vagaries slighting,
Denominates an itch for writing.
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme
To catch the triflers of the time,
And tell them truths divine and clear,
Which, couched in prose, they will not hear ;
Who labour hard to allure and draw
The loiterers I never saw,
Should feel that itching and that tingling,
With all my purpose intermingling,
To your intrinsic merit true,
When called to address myself to you.

Mysterious are His ways whose power
Brings forth that unexpected hour,
When minds, that never met before,
Shall meet, unite, and part no more :
It is the allotment of the skies,
The hand of the Supremely Wise,
That guides and governs our affections,
And plans and orders our connections ;
Directs us in our distant road,
And marks the bounds of our abode.
Thus we were settled when you found us,
Peasants and children all around us,
Not dreaming of so dear a friend,
Deep in the abyss of Silver-End.*

* An obscure part of Olney, adjoining to the residence of Cowper which faced the market-place.

Thus Martha, e'en against her will,
Perched on the top of yonder hill;
And you, though you must needs prefer
The fairer scenes of sweet Sancerre,*
Are come from distant Loire to choose
A cottage on the banks of Ouso.
This page of providence quite new,
And now just opening to our view,
Employs our present thoughts and pains,
To guess and spell what it contains.
But day by day, and year by year,
Will make the dark enigma clear;
And furnish us, perhaps, at last,
Like other scenes already past,
With proof, that we, and our affairs,
Are part of a Jehovah's cares:
For God unfolds by slow degrees
The purport of his deep decrees;
Sheds every hour a clearer light
In aid of our defective sight;
And spreads, at length, before the soul,
A beautiful and perfect whole,
Which busy man's inventive brain
Toils to anticipate in vain.

Say, Anna, had you never known
The beauties of a rose full blown,
Could you, though luminous your eye,
By looking on the bud, descry,
Or guess, with a prophetic power,
The future splendour of the flower?
Just so the Omnipotent, who turns
The system of a world's concerns,
From mere minutiae can educe
Events of most important use;
And bid a dawning sky display
The blaze of a meridian day.

* Lady Austen's residence in France.

The works of man tend, one and all,
 As needs they must, from great to small!
 And vanity absorbs at length
 The monuments of human strength.
 But who can tell how vast the plan
 Which this day's incident began?
 Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion,
 For our dim-sighted observation;
 It passed unnoticed, as the bird
 That cleaves the yielding air unheard,
 And yet may prove, when understood,
 A harbinger of endless good.

Not that I deem, or mean to call
 Friendship a blessing cheap or small;
 But merely to remark, that ours,
 Like some of nature's sweetest flowers,
 Rose from a seed of tiny size,
 That seemed to promise no such prize.
 A transient visit intervening,
 And made almost without a meaning
 (Hardly the effect of inclination,
 Much less of pleasing expectation),
 Produced a friendship, then begun,
 That has cemented us in one;
 And placed it in our power to prove,
 By long fidelity and love,
 That Solomon has wisely spoken,
 "A threefold cord is not soon broken."

Dec 1781.

THE COLUBRIAD.

CLOSE by the threshold of a door nailed fast
 Three kittens sat; each kitten looked aghast.
 I, passing swift and inattentive by,
 At the three kittens cast a careless eye;

Not much concerned to know what they did there,
Not deeming kittens worth a poet's care.
But presently a loud and furious hiss
Caused me to stop, and to exclaim, "What's this?"
When lo! upon the threshold met my view,
With head erect, and eyes of fiery hue,
A viper long as Count de Grasse's queue.
Forth from his head his forked tongue he throws,
Darting it full against a kitten's nose;
Who having never seen, in field or house,
The like, sat still and silent as a mouse;
Only projecting, with attention due,
Her whiskered face, she asked him, "Who are you?"
On to the hall went I, with pace not slow,
But swift as lightning, for a long Dutch hoe;
With which well-armed I hastened to the spot,
To find the viper, but I found him not.
And turning up the leaves and shrubs around,
Found only that he was not to be found.
But still the kittens, sitting as before,
Sat watching close the bottom of the door.
"I hope," said I, "the villain I would kill
Has slipped between the door and the door-sill;
And if I make despatch, and follow hard,
No doubt but I shall find him in the yard:
For long ere now it should have been rehearsed,
'Twas in the garden that I found him first.
E'en there I found him, there the full-grown cat
His head, with velvet paw, did gently pat:
As curious as the kittens erst had been
To learn what this phenomenon might mean.
Filled with heroic ardour at the sight,
And fearing every moment he would bite,
And rob our household of our only cat
That was of age to combat with a rat,
With outstretched hoe I slew him at the door,
And taught him NEVER TO COME THERE NO MORE.

ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE.

WRITTEN WHEN THE NEWS ARRIVED.

To the March in Scipio.

TOLL for the brave!
The brave that are no more .
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore!

Eight hundred of the brave,
Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel,
And laid her on her side.

A land breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was overset ;
Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave !
Brave Kempenfelt is gone,
His last sea-fight is fought, .
His work of glory done.

It was not in the battle ;
No tempest gave the shock ;
She sprang no fatal leak ;
She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath ;
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down
With twice four hundred men.

Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes !

And mingle with our cup
The tear that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again
Full charged with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er ;
And he and his eight hundred
Shall plough the wave no more.

Sept. 1782.

IN SUBMERSIONEM NAVIGII, CUI GEORGIUS
REGALE NOMEN INDITUM.

PLANGIMUS fortes. Periêre fortes,
Patrium propter periêre littus
Bis quater centum ; subitò sub alto
Æquore mersi.

Navis, innitens lateri, jacebat,
Malus ad summas trepidabat undas,
Cùm levis, funes quatiens, ad imum
Depulit aura.

Plangimus fortes. Nimis, heu, caducam
Fortibus vitem voluêre parcæ,
Nec sinunt ultrà tibi nos recentes
Nectere laurus,

Magne, qui nomen, licèt incanorum,
Traditum ex multis atavis tulisti !
At tuos olim memorabit ævum
Omno triumphòs.

Non hyems illos furibunda mersit,
 Non mari in clauso scopuli latente
 Fissa non rimis abies, nec atrox
 Abstulit ensis.

Navitæ sed tum nimium jocosì
 Voce fallebant hilari la'lorem,
 Et quiescebat, calamoque dextram im-
 plevrat heros.

Vos, quibus cordi est grave opus piumque,
 Humidum ex alto spoliùm levate,
 Et putrescentes sub aquis amicos
 Reddite amicis!

Illi quidem (sic dîs placuit) fuêre :
 Sed ratis, nondùm putris, ire possit
 Rursùs in bellum, Britonumque, nomen
 Tollere ad astra.

— — —

SONG.—ON PEACE.

WRITTEN IN THE SUMMER OF 1783, AT THE REQUEST OF
 LADY AUSTEN, WHO GAVE THE SENTIMENT.

Air—"My Fond Shepherds of Late."

No longer I follow a sound ;
 No longer a dream I pursue :
 O happiness ! not to be found,
 Unattainable treasure, adieu !

I have sought thee in splendour and dress,
 In the regions of pleasure and taste ;
 I have sought thee, and seemed to possess,
 But have proved thee a vision at last.

An humble ambition and hope
The voice of true wisdom inspires ;
'Tis sufficient, if peace be the scope,
And the summit of all our desires.

Peace may be the lot of the mind
That seeks it in meekness and love ;
But rapture and bliss are confined
To the glorified spirits above.

SONG.

ALSO WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF LADY AUSTEN.

Air—"The Lass of Pattle's Mill"

WHEN all within is peace,
How nature seems to smile !
Delights that never cease
The livelong day beguile.
From morn to dewy eve
With open hand she showers
Fresh blessings, to deceive
And soothe the silent hours.

It is content of heart
Gives nature power to please ;
The mind that feels no smart
Enlivens all it sees ;
Can make a wintry sky
Seem bright as smiling May,
And evening's closing eye
As peep of early day.

The vast majestic globe,
So beauteously arrayed
In nature's various robe,
With wondrous skill displayed,

Is to a mourner's heart
 A dreary wild at best;
 It flutters to depart.
 And longs to be at rest.

VERSES SELECTED FROM AN OCCASIONAL POEM
 ENTITLED VALEDICTION.

Our Friendship! cordial of the human breast!
 So little felt, so fervently professed!
 Thy blossoms deck our unsuspecting years;
 The promise of delicious fruit appears:
 We hug the hopes of constancy and truth,
 Such is the folly of our dreaming youth;
 But soon, alas! detect the rash mistake
 That sanguine inexperience loves to make;
 And view with tears the expected harvest lost,
 Decayed by time, or withered by a frost.
 Whoever undertakes a friend's great part
 Should be renewed in nature, pure in heart,
 Prepared for martyrdom, and strong to prove
 A thousand ways the force of genuine love.
 He may be called to give up health and gain,
 To exchange content for trouble, ease for pain,
 To echo sigh for sigh, and groan for groan,
 And wet his cheeks with sorrows not his own.
 The heart of man, for such a task too frail,
 When most relied on is most sure to fail;
 And, summoned to partake its fellow's woe,
 Starts from its office like a broken bow.

Votaries of business and of pleasure prove
 Faithless alike in friendship and in love.
 Retired from all the circles of the gay,
 And all the crowds that bustle life away,
 To scenes where competition, envy, strife,
 Beget no thunder-clouds to trouble life,

Let me, the charge of some good angel, find
One who has known, and has escaped mankind ;
Polite, yet virtuous, who has brought away
The manners, not the morals, of the day :
With him, perhaps with her (for men have known
No firmer friendships than the fair have shown),
Let me enjoy in some unthought-of spot,
All former friends forgiven and forgot,
Down to the close of life's fast fading scene,
Union of hearts without a flaw between.
'Tis grace, 'tis bounty, and it calls for praise,
If God give health, that sunshine of our days !
And if he add, a blessing shared by few,
Content of heart, more praises still are due.
But if he grant a friend, that boon possessed
Indeed is treasure, and crowns all the rest :
And giving one, whose heart is in the skies,
Born from above and made divinely wise,
He gives, what bankrupt nature never can,
Whose noblest coin is light and brittle man,
Gold, purer far than Ophir ever knew,
A soul, an image of himself, and therefore true.

Nov. 1783.

EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON.

HERE Johnson lies—a sage by all allowed,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud,
Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought ;
Whose verse may claim—grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song ;
Who many a noble gift from heaven possessed,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth—by glory in the skies !

Jan. 1785.

TO MISS C——, ON HER BIRTH-DAY.

How many between east and west
 Disgrace their parent earth,
 Whose deeds constrain us to detest
 The day that gave them birth !
 Not so when Stella's natal morn
 Revolving months restore,
 We can rejoice that she was born,
 And wish her born once more !

1786.

GRATITUDE.

ADDRESSED TO LADY HESKETH.

THIS cap, that so stately appears,
 With ribbon-bound tassel on high,
 Which seems by the crest that it rears,
 Ambitious of brushing the sky :
 This cap to my cousin I owe,
 She gave it, and gave me beside,
 Wreathed into an elegant bow,
 The ribbon with which it is tied.

This wheel-footed studying chair,
 Contrived both for toil and repose,
 Wide-elbowed, and wadded with hair,
 In which I both scribble and dose,
 Bright-studded to dazzle the eyes,
 And rival in lustre of that
 In which, or astronomy lies,
 Fair Cassiopeia sat :

These carpets, so soft to the foot,
 Caledonia's traffic and pride !

Oh spare them, ye knights of the boot,
Escaped from a cross-country ride !
This table and mirror within,
Secure from collision and dust,
At which I oft shave cheek and chin,
And periwig nicely adjust :

This moveable structure of shelves,
For its beauty admired and its use,
And charged with octavos and twelves,
The gayest I had to produce ;
Where flaming in scarlet and gold,
My poems enchanted I view,
And hope in due time to behold
My Iliad and Odyssey too :

This china, that decks the alcove,
Which here people call a buffet,
But what the gods call it above
Has ne'er been revealed to us yet :
These curtains, that keep the room warm,
Or cool, as the season demands,
Those stoves that for pattern and form
Seem the labour of Mulciber's hands.

All these are not half that I owe
To one, from our earliest youth
To me ever ready to show
Benignity, friendship, and truth ;
For time, the destroyer declared
And foe of our perishing kind,
If even her face he has spared,
Much less could he alter her mind.

Thus compassed about with the goods
And chattels of leisure and ease,
I indulge my poetical moods
In many such fancies as these ;

And fancies I fear they will seem—
 Poets' goods are not often so fine;
 The poets will swear that I dream
 When I sing of the splendour of mine.

1786.

LINES COMPOSED FOR A MEMORIAL OF
 ASHLEY COWPER, ESQ.,

IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS DEATH, BY HIS NEPHEW
 WILLIAM, OF WESTON.

FAREWELL! endued with all that could engage
 All hearts to love thee, both in youth and age!
 In prime of life, for sprightliness enrolled
 Among the gay, yet virtuous as the old;

In life's last stage, (O blessings rarely found!)
 Pleasant as youth with all its blossoms crowned;
 Through every period of this changeful state
 Unchanged thyself—wise, good, affectionate!

Marble may flatter, and lest this should seem
 O'ercharged with praises on so dear a theme,
 Although thy worth be more than half suppress'd,
 Love shall be satisfied, and veil the rest.

June 1788.

ON THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO LONDON,
 THE NIGHT OF THE SEVENTEENTH OF MARCH, 1789.

WHEN, long-sequestered from his throne,
 George took his seat again,
 By wright of worth, not blood alone,
 Entitled here to reign,

Then loyalty, with all his lamps
New trimmed, a gallant show !
Chasing the darkness and the damps,
Set London in a glow.

'Twas hard to tell, of streets or squares,
Which formed the chief display,
These most resembling clustered stars
Those the long milky-way.

Bright shone the roofs, the domes, the spires,
And rockets flew, self-driven,
To hang their momentary fires
Amid the vault of heaven.

So, fire with water to compare,
The ocean serves, on high
Up-spouted by a whale in air,
To express unwieldy joy.

Had all the pageants of the world
In one procession joined,
And all the banners been unfurled
That heralds e'er designed,

For no such sight had England's Queen
Forsaken her retreat,
Where George, recovered, made a scene,
Sweet always, doubly sweet.

Yet glad she came that night to prove,
A witness undescried,
How much the object of her love
Was loved by all beside.

Darkness the skies had mantled o'er,
In aid of her design—
Darkness, O Queen ! ne'er called before
To veil a deed of thine.

On borrowed wheels away she flies,
Resolved to be unknown,
And gratify no curious eyes
That night except her own.

Arrived, a night like noon she sees,
And hears the million hum ;
As all by instinct, like the bees,
Had known their sovereign come.

Pleased she beheld aloft portrayed,
On many a splendid wall,
Emblems of health and heavenly aid,
And George the theme of all.

Unlike the enigmatic line,
So difficult to spell,
Which shook Belshazzar at his wine,
The night his city fell.

Soon watery grew her eyes and dim,
But with a joyful tear,
None else, except in prayer for him,
George ever drew from her.

It was a scene in every part
Like those in fable feigned,
And seemed by some magician's art
Created and sustained.

But other magic there, she knew,
Had been exerted none,
To raise such wonders in her view,
Save love of George alone.

That cordial thought her spirit cheered,
And through the cumbrous throng,
Not else unworthy to be feared,
Conveyed her calm along.

So, ancient poets say, serene
The sea-maid rides the waves,
And fearless of the billowy scene,
Her peaceful bosom laves.

With more than astronomic eyes
She viewed the sparkling show ;
One Georgian star adorns the skies,
She myriads found below.

Yet let the glories of a night
Like that, once seen, suffice ;
Heaven grant us no such future sight,
Such previous woe the price !

THE COCK-FIGHTER'S GARLAND.*

MUSE—hide his name of whom I sing,
Lest his surviving house thou bring
For his sake into scorn,
Nor speak the school from which he drew
The much or little that he knew,
Nor place where he was born.

* Written on reading the following in the obituary of the Gentleman's Magazine for April 1789 :—" At Tottenham, John Ardesolf, Esq., a young man of large fortune, and in the splendour of his carriages and horses rivalled by few country gentlemen. His table was that of hospitality, where, it may be said, he sacrificed too much to conviviality; but if he had his foibles, he had his merits also, that far outweighed them. Mr. A. was very fond of cock-fighting, and had a favourite cock, upon which he had won many profitable matches. The last bet he laid upon this cock he lost; which so enraged him, that he had the bird tied to a spit and roasted alive before a large fire. The screams of the miserable animal were so affecting, that some gentlemen who were present attempted to interfere, which so enraged Mr. A., that he seized a poker, and with the most furious vehemence declared, that he would kill the first man who interposed; but, in the midst of his passionate asseverations, he fell down dead upon the spot. Such, we are assured were the circumstances which attended the death of this great pillar of humanity."

That such a man once was, may seem
Worthy of record (if the theme
Perchance may credit win),
For proof to man, what man may prove,
If grace depart, and demons move
The source of guilt within.

This man (for since the howling wild
Disclaims him, man he must be styled)
Wanted no good below,
Gentle he was, if gentle birth
Could make him such, and he had worth,
If wealth can worth bestow.

In social talk and ready jest,
He shone superior at the feast,
And qualities of mind,
Illustrious in the eyes of those
Whose gay society he chose,
Possessed of every kind.

Methinks I see him powdered red,
With bushy locks his well-dressed head
Winged broad on either side,
The mossy rosebud not so sweet;
His steeds superb, his carriage neat,
As luxury could provide.

Can such be cruel? Such can be
Cruel as hell, and so was he;
A tyrant entertained
With barbarous sports, whose fell delight
Was to encourage mortal fight
'Twixt birds to battle trained.

One feathered champion he possessed,
His darling far beyond the rest,
Which never know disgrace,

Nor e'er had fought but he made flow
The lifeblood of his fiercest foe—
The Cæsar of his race.

It chanced at last, when on a day
He pushed him to the desperate fray,
His courage drooped, he fled.
The master stormed, the prize was lost,
And, instant, frantic, at the cost,
He doomed his favourite dead.

He seized him fast, and from the pit
Flew to the kitchen, snatched the spit,
And, Bring me cord, he cried ;
The cord was brought, and, at his word,
To that dire implement the bird,
Alive and struggling, tied.

The horrid sequel asks a veil ;
And all the terrors of the tale
That can be shall be sunk—
Led by the sufferer's screams aright,
His shocked companions view the sight,
And him with fury drunk.

All, suppliant, beg a milder fate
For the old warrior at the grate :
He, deaf to pity's call,
Whirled round him rapid as a wheel
His culinary club of steel,
Death menacing on all.

But vengeance hung not far remote,
For while he stretched his clamorous throat,
And heaven and earth defied,
Big with a curse too closely pent,
That struggled vainly for a vent,
He tottered, reeled, and died.

"Tis not for us with rash surmise,
 To point the judgment of the skies;
 But judgments plain as this,
 That, sent for man's instruction, bring
 A written label on their wing,
 'Tis hard to read amiss.

May 1789.

TO WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ.,

BY AN OLD SCHOOLFELLOW OF HIS AT WESTMINSTER.

HASTINGS! I know thee young, and of a mind
 While young humane, conversable, and kind;
 Nor can I well believe thee, gentle then,
 Now grown a villain, and the worst of men.
 But rather some suspect, who have oppressed
 And worried thee, as not themselves the best.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON,

ON HER BEAUTIFUL TRANSCRIPT OF HORACE'S ODE,
 "AD LIBRUM SUUM."

MARIA, could Horace have guessed
 What honour awaited his ode,
 To his own little volume addressed,
 The honour which you have bestowed;
 Who have traced it in characters here,
 So elegant, even, and neat,
 He had laughed at the critical sneer,
 Which he seems to have trembled to meet.

And sneer, if you please, he had said,
 A nymph shall hereafter arise
 Who shall give me, when you are all dead,
 The glory your malice denies;

Shall dignity give to my lay,
Although but a mere bagatelle ;
And even a poet shall say,
Nothing ever was written so well.

Feb. 1790.

TO THE
IMMORTAL MEMORY OF THE HALIBUT,

ON WHICH I DINED THIS DAY, MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1784.

WHERE hast thou floated, in what seas pursued
Thy pastime? When wast thou an egg now spawned,
Lost in the immensity of ocean's waste?
Roar as they might, the overbearing winds
That rocked the deep, thy cradle, thou wast safe—
And in thy minikin and embryo state,
Attached to the firm leaf of some salt weed,
Didst outlive tempests, such as wrung and racked
The joints of many a stout and gallant bark,
And whelmed them in the unexplored abyss.
Indebted to no magnet and no chart,
Nor under guidance of the polar fire,
Thou wast a voyager on many coasts,
Grazing at large in meadows submarine,
Where flat Batavia just emerging peeps
Above the brine—where Caledonia's rocks
Beat back the surge—and where Hibernia shoots
Her wondrous causeway far into the main.
Wherever thou hast fed, thou little thought'st,
And I not more, that I should feed on thee;
Peace, therefore, and good health, and much good fish,
To him who sent thee! and success, as oft
As it descends into the billowy gulf,
To the same drag that caught thee!—Fare thee well!
Thy lot thy brethren of the slimy fin
Would envy, could they know that thou wast doomed
To feed a bard, and to be praised in verse.

INSCRIPTION

FOR A STONE ERECTED AT THE SOWING OF A GROVE OF OAKS
AT CHILLINGTON, THE SEAT OF T. GIFFORD, ESQ., 1790.

OTHER stones the era tell
When some feeble mortal fell ;
I stand here to date the birth
Of these hardy sons of earth.

Which shall longest brave the sky,
Storm, and frost—these oaks or I !
Pass an age or two away,
I must moulder and decay ;
But the years that crumble me
Shall invigorate the tree,
Spread its branch, dilate its size,
Lift its summit to the skies.

Cherish honour, virtue, truth,
So shalt thou prolong thy youth ;
Wanting these, however fast
Man be fixed and formed to last,
He is lifeless even now,
Stone at heart, and cannot grow.

June 1790.

ANOTHER,

FOR A STONE ERECTED ON A SIMILAR OCCASION AT THE
SAME PLACE IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR.

READER ! behold a monument
That asks no sigh or tear,
Though it perpetuate the event
Of a great burial here.

June 1790.

Anno, 1791.

TO MRS. KING,

ON HER KIND PRESENT TO THE AUTHOR, A PATCHWORK
COUNTERPANE OF HER OWN MAKING.

THE bard, if e'er he feel at all,
Must sure be quickened by a call
Both on his heart and head,
To pay with tuneful thanks the care
And kindness of a lady fair
Who deigns to deck his bed.

A bed like this, in ancient time,
On Ida's barren top sublime,
(As Homer's epic shows),
Composed of sweetest vernal flowers,
Without the aid of sun or showers,
For Jove and Juno rose.

Less beautiful, however gay,
Is that which in the scorching day
Receives the weary swain,
Who, laying his long sinthe aside,
Sleeps on some bank with daisies pied,
Till roused to toil again.

What labours of the loom I see!
Looms numberless have groaned for me!
Should every maiden come
To scramble for the patch that bears
The impress of the robe she wears,
The bell would toll for some.

And oh, what havoc would ensue!
This bright display of every hue
All in a moment fled!

As if a storm should strip the bowers
Of all her tendrils, leaves, and flowers—
Each pocketing a shred.

Thanks, then, to every gentle fair
Who will not come to peck me bare
As bird of borrowed feather;
And thanks to one above them all,
The gentle fair of Pertenhall,
Who put the whole together.

August 1790.

IN

MEMORY OF THE LATE JOHN THORNTON, ESQ.

POETS attempt the noblest task they can,
Praising the Author of all good in man,
And, next, commemorating worthies lost,
The dead in whom that good abounded most.

Thee, therefore, of commercial fame, but more
Famed for thy probity from shore to shore,
Thee, Thornton! worthy in some page to shine,
As honest and more eloquent than mine,
I mourn! or, since thrice happy thou must be,
The world, no longer thy abode, not thee.
Thee to deplore were grief misspent indeed;
It were to weep that goodness has its meed,
That there is bliss prepared in yonder sky,
And glory for the virtuous when they die.

What pleasure can the miser's fondled hoard
Or spendthrift's prodigal excess afford,
Sweet as the privilege of healing woe
By virtue suffered combating below?
That privilege was thine; heaven gave thee means
To illumine with delight the saddest scenes,
Till thy appearance chased the gloom, forlorn
As midnight, and despairing of a morn.

Thou hadst an industry in doing good,
Restless as his who toils and sweats for food ;
Avarice in thee was the desire of wealth
By rust unperishable or by stealth ;
And if the genuine worth of gold depend
On application to its noblest end,
Thine had a value in the scales of heaven,
Surpassing all that mine or mint had given.
And, though God made thee of a nature prone
To distribution boundless of thy own,
And still by motives of religious force
Impelled thee more to that heroic course,
Yet was thy liberality discreet,
Nice in its choice, and of a tempered heat ;
And though in act unwearied, secret still,
As in some solitude the summer rill
Refreshes, where it winds, the faded green,
And cheers the drooping flowers, unheard, unseen.

Such was thy charity ; no sudden start,
After long sleep, of passion in the heart,
But steadfast principle, and, in its kind,
Of close relation to the Eternal Mind,
Traced easily to its true source above,
To him whose works bespeak his nature, love.

Thy bounties all were Christian, and I make
This record of thee for the Gospel's sake ;
That the incredulous themselves may see
Its use and power exemplified in thee.

Nov. 1790.

THE FOUR AGES.

(A BRIEF FRAGMENT OF AN EXTENSIVE PROJECTED POEM.)

" I COULD be well content, allowed the use
Of past experience, and the wisdom gleaned
From worn-out follies, now acknowledged such,

To recommence life's trial, in the hope
Of fewer errors, on a second proof!"

Thus, while gray evening lulled the wind, and called
Fresh odours from the shrubbery at my side,
Taking my lonely winding walk, I mused,
And held accustomed conference with my heart;
When from within it thus a voice replied:

"Couldst thou in truth? and art thou taught at length
This wisdom, and but this, from all the past?
Is not the pardon of thy long arrear,
Time wasted, violated laws, abuse
Of talents, judgment, mercies, better far
Than opportunity vouchsafed to err
With less excuse, and, haply, worse effect?"

I heard, and acquiesced: then to and fro
Oft pacing, as the mariner his deck,
My gravelly bounds, from self to human kind
I passed, and next considered—what is man?

Knows he his origin? can he ascend
By reminiscence to his earliest date?
Slept he in Adam? And in those from him
Through numerous generations, till he found
At length his destined moment to be born?
Or was he not, till fashioned in the womb?
Deep mysteries both! which schoolmen must have toiled
To unriddle, and have left them mysteries still.

It is an evil incident to man,
And of the worst, that unexplored he leaves
Truths useful and attainable with ease,
To search forbidden deeps, where mystery lies
Not to be solved, and useless if it might.
Mysteries are food for angels; they digest
With ease, and find them nutriment; but man,
While yet he dwells below, must stoop to glean
His manna from the ground, or starve and die.

May 1791.

THE RETIRED CAT.*

A POET'S cat, sedate and grave
As poet well could wish to have,
Was much addicted to inquire
For nooks to which she might retire,
And where, secure as mouse in chink,
She might repose, or sit and think.
I know not where she caught the trick.

Nature perhaps herself had cast her
In such a mould philosophique,

Or else she learned it of her master.
Sometimes ascending, debonnaire,
An apple-tree, or lofty pear,
Lodged with convenience in the fork,
She watched the gardener at his work ;
Sometimes her ease and solace sought
In an old empty watering-pot ;
There, wanting nothing save a fan,
To seem some nymph in her sedan,
Appareled in exactest sort,
And ready to be borne to court.

But love of change, it seems, has place
Not only in our wiser race ;
Cats also feel, as well as we,
That passion's force, and so did she.
Her climbing, she began to find,
Exposed her too much to the wind,

* Cowper's partiality to animals is well known. Lady Hesketh, in one of her letters, states, "that he had, at one time, five rabbits, three hares, two guinea-pigs, a magpie, a jay, and a starling; besides two goldfinches, two canary birds, and two dogs. It is amazing how the three hares can find room to gamble and frolic (as they certainly do) in his small parlour;" and adds, "I forgot to enumerate a squirrel, which he had at the same time, and which used to play with one of the hares continually. One evening, the cat giving one of the hares a sound box on the ear, the hare ran after her, and having caught her, punished her by drumming on her back with her two feet, as hard as drumsticks, till the creature would have actually been killed, had not Mrs. Unwin rescued her."

And the old utensil of tin
Was cold and comfortless within :
She therefore wished, instead of those,
Some place of more serene repose,
Where neither cold might come, nor air
Too rudely wanton with her hair,
And sought it in the likeliest mode
Within her master's snug abode.

A drawer, it chanced, at bottom lined
With linen of the softest kind,
With such as merchants introduce
From India, for the ladies' use,
A drawer impending o'er the rest,
Half-open in the topmost chest,
Of depth enough, and none to spare,
Invited her to slumber there ;
Puss, with delight beyond expression,
Surveyed the scene, and took possession.
Recumbent at her ease ere long,
And lulled by her own humdrum song,
She left the cares of life behind,

And slept as she would sleep her last,
When in came, housewifely inclined,
The chambermaid, and shut it fast ;
By no malignity impelled,
But all unconscious whom it held.

Awakened by the shock (cried Puss)
" Was ever cat attended thus ?
The open drawer was left, I see,
Merely to prove a nest for me ;
For soon as I was well composed,
Then came the maid, and it was closed,
How smooth these 'kerchiefs, and how sweet !
Oh what a delicate retreat !
I will resign myself to rest
Till Sol, declining in the west,
Shall call to supper, when, no doubt,
Susan will come and let me out."

The evening came, the sun descended,
And Puss remained still unattended.
The night rolled tardily away
(With her, indeed, 'twas never day),
The sprightly morn her course renewed,
The evening gray again ensued,
And Puss came into mind no more
Than if entombed the day before.
With hunger pinched, and pinched for room,
She now presaged approaching doom,
Nor slept a single wink, or purred,
Conscious of jeopardy incurred.

That night, by chance, the poet watching,
Heard an inexplicable scratching :
His noble heart went pit-a-pat,
And to himself he said—"What's that?"
He drew the curtain at his side,
And forth he peeped, but nothing spied.
Yet, by his ear directed, guessed
Something imprisoned in the chest,
And doubtful what, with prudent care
Resolved it should continue there.
At length a voice which well he knew,
A long and melancholy mow,
Saluting his poetic ears,
Consoled him, and dispelled his fears :
He left his bed, he trod the floor,
He 'gan in haste the drawers explore,
The lowest first, and without stop
The rest in order to the top.
For 'tis a truth well known to most,
That whatsoever thing is lost,
We seek it, ere it come to light,
In every cranny but the right.
Forth skipped the cat, not now replete
As erst with airy self-conceit,
Nor in her own fond apprehension
A theme for all the world's attention,

But modest, sober, cured of all
Her notions hyperbolical,
And wishing for a place of rest
Anything rather than a chest.
Then stepped the poet into bed
With this reflection in his head :—

M O R A L.

Beware of too sublime a sense
Of your own worth and consequence.
The man who dreams himself so great,
And his importance of such weight,
That all around, in all that's done,
Must move and act for him alone,
Will learn in school of tribulation
The folly of his expectation.

1791.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE POETS.

Two nymphs, both nearly of an age,
Of numerous charms possessed,
A warm dispute once chanced to wage,
Whose temper was the best.

The worth of each had been complete,
Had both alike been mild ;
But one, although her smile was sweet,
Frowned oftener than she smiled.

And in her humour, when she frowned,
Would raise her voice, and roar,
And shake with fury to the ground
The garland that she wore.

The other was of gentler cast,
From all such frenzy clear,

Her frowns were seldom known to last,
And never proved severe.

To poets of renown in song
The nymphs referred the cause,
Who, strange to tell, all judged it wrong,
And gave misplaced applause.

They gentle called, and kind and soft,
The flippant and the scold,
And though she changed her mood so oft,
That failing left untold.

No judges, sure, were e'er so mad,
Or so resolved to err—
In short, the charms her sister had,
They lavished all on her.

Then thus the god whom fondly they
Their great inspirer call,
Was heard, one genial summer's day,
To reprimand them all :

"Since thus ye have combined," he said,
"My favourite nymph to slight,
Adorning May, that peevish maid,
With June's undoubted right,"

"The minx shall, for your folly's sake,
Still prove herself a shrew,
Shall make your scribbling fingers ache,
And pinch your noses blue."

YARDLEY OAK.

SURVIVOR sole, and hardly such, of all
 That once lived here, thy brethren, at my birth
 (Since which I number threescore winters past),
 A shattered veteran, hollow-trunked perhaps,
 As now, and with excoriate forks deform,
 Relics of ages! could a mind imbued
 With truth from heaven, created thing adore,
 I might with reverence kneel, and worship thee.

It seems idolatry with some excuse,
 When our forefather Druids in their oaks
 Imagined sanctity. The conscience, yet
 Unpurified by an authentic act
 Of amnesty, the meed of blood divine,
 Loved not the light, but, gloomy, into gloom
 Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste
 Of fruit proscribed, as to a refuge, fled.

Thou wast a bauble once, a cup and ball
 Which babes might play with; and the thievish jay,
 Seeking her food, with ease might have purloined
 The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
 Thy yet close-folded latitude of boughs
 And all thine embryo vastness at a gulp.
 But fate thy growth decreed; autumnal rains
 Beneath thy parent tree mellowed the soil
 Designed thy cradle; and a skipping deer,
 With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepared
 The soft receptacle, in which, secure,
 Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through.

So fancy dreams. Disprove it if ye can,
 Ye reasoners broad awake, whose busy search
 Of argument, employed too oft amiss,
 Sifts half the pleasures of short life away!

Thou fell'st mature; and, in the loamy clod
 Swelling with vegetative force instinct,

Didst burst thine egg, as theirs the fabled twins,
Now stars ; two lobes, protruding, paired exact ;
A leaf succeeded, and another leaf,
And, all the elements thy puny growth
Fostering propitious, thou becam'st a twig.

Who lived when thou wast such ? O, couldst thou speak,
As in Dodona once thy kindred trees
Oracular, I would not curious ask
The future, best unknown, but, at thy mouth
Inquisitive, the less ambiguous past.

By thee I might correct, erroneous oft,
The clock of history, facts and events
Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts
Recovering, and misstated setting right—
Desperate attempt, till trees shall speak again !

“Time made thee what thou wast—king of the woods ;
And time hath made thee what thou art—a cave
For owls to roost in. Once thy spreading boughs
O'erhung the champaign ; and the numerous flocks
That grazed it stood beneath that ample cope
Uncrowded, yet safe sheltered from the storm.
No flock frequents thee now. Thou hast outlived
Thy popularity, and art become
(Unless verse rescue thee awhile) a thing
Forgotten, as the foliage of thy youth.

While thus through all the stages thou hast pushed
Of treeship—first a seedling, hid in grass ;
Then twig ; then sapling ; and, as century rolled
Slow after century, a giant bulk
Of girth enormous, with moss-cushioned root
Upheaved above the soil, and sides embossed
With prominent wens globose ; till at the last
The rottenness, which time is charged to inflict
On other mighty ones, found also thee—
What exhibitions various hath the world
Witnessed of mutability in all
That we account most durable below !
Change is the diet on which all subsist,

Created changeable, and change at last
Destroys them. Skies uncertain now the heat
Transmitting cloudless, and the solar beam
Now quenching in a boundless sea of clouds—
Calm and alternate storm, moisture, and drought,
Invigorate by turns the springs of life
In all that live—plant, animal, and man—
And in conclusion mar them. Nature's threads,
Fine passing thought, e'en in their coarsest works,
Delight in agitation, yet sustain
The force that agitates not unimpaired ;
But worn by frequent impulse, to the cause
Of their best tone their dissolution owe.

Thought cannot spend itself, comparing still
The great and little of thy lot, thy growth
From almost nullity into a state
Of matchless grandeur, and declension thence,
Slow, into such magnificent decay.
Time was, when, settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root—and time has been
When tempests could not. At thy firmest age
Thou hadst within thy bole solid contents
That might have ribbed the sides and planked the deck
Of some flagged admiral ; and tortuous arms,
The shipwright's darling treasure, didst present
To the four-quartered winds, robust and bold,
Warped into tough knee-timber, many a load ! *
But the axe spared thee. In those thriftier days
Oaks fell not, hewn by thousands, to supply
The bottomless demands of contest waged
For senatorial honours. Thus to time
The task was left to whittle thee away
With his sly sithe, whose ever-nibbling edge,
Noiseless, an atom, and an atom more,
Disjoining from the rest, has, unobserved,

* Knee-timber is found in the crooked arms of oak, which, by reason of their distortion, are easily adjusted to the angle formed where the deck and the ship's sides meet.

Achieved a labour which had, far and wide,
By man performed, made all the forest ring.

Emboweled now, and of thy ancient self
Possessing nought but the scooped rind, that seems
A huge throat calling to the clouds for drink,
Which it would give in rivulets to thy root,
Thou temptest none, but rather much forbidd'st
The feller's toil, which thou couldst ill requite.
Yet is thy root sincere, sound as the rock,
A quarry of stout spurs and knotted fangs,
Which, crooked into a thousand whimsies, clasp
The stubborn soil, and hold thee still erect.

So stands a kingdom, whose foundation yet
Fails not, in virtue and in wisdom laid,
Though all the superstructure, by the tooth
Pulverized of venality, a shell
Stands now, and semblance only of itself!

Thine arms have left thee. Winds have rent them off
Long since, and rovers of the forest wild,
With bow and shaft, have burnt them. Some have left
A splintered stump bleached to a snowy white;
And some memorial none where once they grew.
Yet life still lingers in thee, and puts forth
Proof not contemptible of what she can,
Even where death predominates. The spring
Finds thee not less alive to her sweet force
Than yonder upstarts of the neighbouring wood,
So much thy juniors, who their birth received
Half a millennium since the date of thine.

But since, although well qualified by age
To teach, no spirit dwells in thee, nor voice
May be expected from thee, seated here
On thy distorted root, with hearers none,
Or prompter, save the scene, I will perform,
Myself the oracle, and will discourse
In my own ear such matter as I may.

One man alone, the father of us all,
Drew not his life from woman; never gazed,

With mute unconsciousness of what he saw,
On all around him ; learned not by degrees,
Nor owed articulation to his ear ;
But, moulded by his Maker into man
At once, upstood intelligent, surveyed
All creatures, with precision understood
Their purport, uses, properties, assigned
To each his name significant, and, filled
With love and wisdom, rendered back to Heaven
In praise harmonious the first air he drew.
He was excused the penalties of dull
Minority. No tutor charged his hand
With the thought-tracing quill, or tasked his mind
With problems. History, not wanted yet,
Leaned on her elbow, watching time, whose course
Eventful, should supply her with a theme ; . . .

1791.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE,

WHICH THE AUTHOR HEARD SING ON NEW-YEAR'S DAY.

WHENCE is it that, amazed, I hear
From yonder withered spray,
This foremost morn of all the year,
The melody of May ?

And why, since thousands would be proud
Of such a favour shown,
Am I selected from the crowd
To witness it alone ?

Sing'st thou, sweet Philomel, to me,
For that I also long
Have practised in the groves like thee,
Though not like thee in song ?

Or sing'st thou, rather, under force
Of some divine command,

Commissioned to presage a course
Of happier days at hand!

Thrice welcome then! for many a long
And joyless year have I,
As thou to-day, put forth my song
Beneath a wintry sky.

But thee no wintry skies can harm,
Who only need'st to sing
To make e'en January charm,
And every season spring.

1792.

LINES WRITTEN IN AN ALBUM

OF MISS PATTY MORE'S, SISTER OF HANNAH MORE.

In vain to live from age to age
While modern bards endeavour,
I write my name in Patty's page,
And gain my point for ever.

March 6, 1792.

W. COWPER.

SONNET TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

THY country, Wilberforce, with just disdain,
Hears thee by cruel men and impious called
Fanatic, for thy zeal to loose the intralld
From exile, public sale, and slavery's chain.
Friend of the poor, the wronged, the fetter-galled,
Fear not lest labour such as thine be vain.

Thou hast achieved a part; hast gained the ear
Of Britain's senate to thy glorious cause;
Hope smiles, joy springs, and, though cold caution pause

And weave delay, the better hour is near
 That shall remunerate thy toils severe,
 By peace for Afric, fenced with British laws.

Enjoy what thou hast won—esteem and love
 From all the just on earth and all the blest above.

April 16, 1792.

EPIGRAM.

PRINTED IN THE NORTHAMPTON MERCURY.

To purify their wine some people bleed
 A lamb into the barrel, and succeed ;
 No nostrum, planters say, is half so good
 To make fine sugar as a negro's blood.

Now lambs and negroes both are harmless things,
 And thence, perhaps, this wondrous virtue springs,
 'Tis in the blood of innocence alone—
 Good cause why planters never try their own.

TO DR. AUSTIN, OF CECIL STREET, LONDON.

AUSTIN! accept a grateful verse from me,
 The poet's treasure, no inglorious fee.
 Loved by the Muses, thy ingenuous mind
 Pleasing requital in my verse may find ;
 Verse oft has dashed the sithc of time aside,
 Immortalizing names which else had died.
 And O! could I command the glittering wealth
 With which sick kings are glad to purchase health!
 Yet, if extensive fame, and sure to live,
 Were in the power of verse like mine to give,

I would not recompense his art with less,
Who, giving Mary health, heals my distress.

Friend of my friend !* I love thee, though unknown,
And boldly call thee, being his, my own.

May 28, 1792.

CATHARINA :

THE SECOND PART : ON HER MARRIAGE TO GEORGE
COURTENAY, ESQ.

BELIEVE it or not, as you choose,
The doctrine is certainly true,
That the future is known to the Muse,
And poets are oracles too.
I did but express a desire
To see Catharina at home,
At the side of my friend George's fire,
And lo—she is actually come.

Such prophecy some may despise,
But the wish of a poet and friend
Perhaps is approved in the skies,
And therefore attains to its end.
'Twas a wish that flew ardently forth
From a bosom effectually warmed
With the talents, the graces, and worth,
Of the person for whom it was formed.

Maria† would leave us, I knew,
To the grief and regret of us all,
But less to our grief, could we view
Catharina the Queen of the Hall.
And therefore I wished as I did,
And therefore this union of hands
Not a whisper was heard to forbid,
But all cry—Amen—to the bans.

* Hayley.

† Lady Throckmorton.

Since, therefore, I seem to incur
 No danger of wishing in vain
 When making good wishes for her,
 I will e'en to my wishes again.
 With one I have made her a wife,
 And now I will try with another,
 Which I cannot suppress for my life—
 How soon I can make her a mother.

June 1792.

EPITAPH ON FOP,

A DOG BELONGING TO LADY THROCKMORTON.

THOUGH once a puppy, and though Fop by name,
 Here moulders one whose bones some honour claim,
 No sycophant, although of spaniel race,
 And, though no hound, a martyr to the chase.
 Ye squirrels, rabbits, leverets, rejoice,
 Your haunts no longer echo to his voice;
 This record of his fate exulting view—
 He died worn out with vain pursuit of you.
 "Yes," the indignant shade of Fop replies,
 "And worn with vain pursuit man also dies."

August 1792.

SONNET TO GEORGE ROMNEY, ESQ.,

ON HIS PICTURE OF ME IN CRAYONS, DRAWN AT EARTHAM
 IN THE SIXTY-FIRST YEAR OF MY AGE, AND IN THE
 MONTHS AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1792.

ROMNEY, expert infallibly to trace
 On chart or canvass, not the form alone
 And semblance, but, however faintly shown,
 The mind's impression too on every face—

With strokes that time ought never to erase,
Thou hast so pencilled mine, that, though I own
The subject worthless, I have never known
The artist shining with superior grace.
But this I mark—that symptoms none of woe
In thy incomparable work appear.
Well—I am satisfied it should be so,
Since, on maturer thought, the cause is clear ;
For in my looks what sorrow couldst thou see,
When I was Haley's guest, and sat to thee?
October 1792.

MARY AND JOHN.

If John marries Mary, and Mary alone,
'Tis a very good match between Mary and John,
Should John wed a score, oh, the claws and the scratches!
It can't be a match—'tis a bundle of matches.

EPITAPH ON MR. CHESTER, OF CHICHELEY.

TEARS flow, and cease not, where the good man lies,
Till all who knew him follow to the skies.
Tears therefore fall where Chester's ashes sleep ;
Him wife, friends, brothers, children, servants weep —
And justly—few shall ever him transcend
As husband, parent, brother, master, friend.
April 1793.

TO MY COUSIN, ANNE BODHAM,
ON RECEIVING FROM HER A NETWORK PURSE, MADE BY
HERSELF.

My gentle Anne, whom heretofore,
When I was young, and thou no more
Than plaything for a nurse,
I danced and fondled on my knee,
A kitten both in size and glee,
I thank thee for my purse.

Gold pays the worth of all things here;
But not of love—that gem's too dear
For richest rogues to win it;
I, therefore, as a proof of love,
Esteem thy present far above
The best things kept within it.

May 4, 1793.

INSCRIPTION

FOR A HERMITAGE IN THE AUTHOR'S GARDEN.

THIS cabin, Mary, in my sight appears,
Built as it has been in our waning years,
A rest afforded to our weary feet,
Preliminary to—the last retreat.

May 1793.

TO MRS. UNWIN.

MARY! I want a lyre with other strings,
Such aid from heaven as some have feigned they drew,
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
And undebased by praise of meaner things,

That ere through age or woe I shed my wings,
I may record thy worth with honour due,
In verse as musical as thou art true,
And that immortalizes whom it sings.
But thou hast little need. There is a book
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light,
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,
A chronicle of actions just and bright;
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine,
And, since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine.

May 1793.

TO JOHN JOHNSON,

ON HIS PRESENTING ME WITH AN ANTIQUE BUST OF HOMER.

KINSMAN beloved, and as a son, by me !
When I behold this fruit of thy regard,
The sculptured form of my old favourite bard,
I reverence feel for him, and love for thee.
Joy too, and grief. Much joy that there should be
Wise men, and learned, who grudge not to reward
With some applause my bold attempt and hard,
Which others scorn, critics by courtesy.
The grief is this, that, sunk in Homer's mine,
I lose my precious years, now soon to fail
Handling his gold, which, howsoe'er it shine,
Proves dross when balanced in the Christian scale.
Be wiser thou—like our forefather Donne,
Seek heavenly wealth, and work for God alone.

May 1793.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND,

ON HIS ARRIVING AT CAMBRIDGE WET WHEN NO RAIN
HAD FALLEN THERE.

IF Gideon's fleece, which, drench'd with dew he found,
While moisture none refreshed the herbs around,
Might fitly represent the church endowed
With heavenly gifts, to heathens not allowed;
In pledge, perhaps, of favours from on high,
Thy locks were wet when others' locks were dry.
Heaven grant us half the omen—may we see
Not drought on others, but much dew on thee!

May 1793.

A T A L E.*

IN Scotland's realms, where trees are few,
Nor even shrubs abound;
But where, however bleak the view,
Some better things are found.

For husband there and wife may boast
Their union undefiled,
And false ones are as rare almost
As hedgerows in the wild.

In Scotland's realm forlorn and bare,
The history chanced of late—

* This tale is founded on an article which appeared in the Buckinghamshire Herald, for Saturday, June 1, 1793:—Glasgow, May 23. In a block, or pulley, near the head of the mast of a gabert, now lying at the Broomielaw, there is a chaffinch's nest and four eggs. The nest was built while the vessel lay at Greenock, and was followed hither by both birds. Though the block is occasionally lowered for the inspection of the curious, the birds have not forsaken the nest. The cock, however, visits the nest but seldom, while the hen never leaves it, but when she descends to the hull for food.

This history of a wedded pair,
A chaffinch and his mate.

The spring drew near, each felt a breast
With genial instinct filled;
They paired, and would have built a nest,
But found not where to build.

The heaths uncovered and the moors,
Except with snow and sleet,
Sea-beaten rocks and naked shores
Could yield them no retreat.

Long time a breeding-place they sought,
Till both grew vexed and tired;
At length a ship arriving brought
The good so long desired.

A ship!—could such a restless thing
Afford them place of rest?
Or was the merchant charged to bring
The homeless birds a nest?

Hush—silent hearers profit most—
This racer of the sea
Proved kinder to them than the coast—
It served them with a tree.

But such a tree! 'Twas shaven deal,
The tree they call a mast,
And had a hollow with a wheel,
Through which the tackle passed.

Within that cavity aloft
Their roofless home they fixed,
Formed with materials neat and soft,
Bents, wool, and feathers mixed.

Four ivory eggs soon pave its floor,
With russet specks bedight—
The vessel weighs, forsakes the shore,
And lessens to the sight.

The mother-bird is gone to sea,
As she had changed her kind ;
But goes the male? Far wiser, he
Is doubtless left behind.

No—soon as from ashore he saw
The winged mansion move,
He flew to reach it, by a law
Of never-failing love.

Then, perching at his consort's side,
Was briskly borne along,
The billows and the blast defied,
And cheered her with a song.

The seaman with sincere delight
His feathered shipmates eyes,
Scarce less exulting in the sight
Than when he tows a prize.

For seamen much believe in signs,
And from a chance so new
Each some approaching good divine ;
And may his hopes be true !

Hail, honoured land ! a desert where
Not even birds can hide,
Yet parent of this loving pair,
Whom nothing could divide.

And ye who, rather than resign
Your matrimonial plan,
Were not afraid to plough the brine
In company with man.

Minor Poems.

For whose lean country much disdain
We English often show,
Yet from a richer nothing gain
But wantonness and woe.

Be it your fortune, year by year,
The same resource to prove,
And may ye, sometimes landing here,
Instruct us how to love!

June 1793.

ON A SPANIEL, CALLED BEAU, KILLING
A YOUNG BIRD.

A SPANIEL, Beau, that fares like you,
Well fed, and at his ease,
Should wiser be than to pursue
Each trifle that he sees.

But you have killed a tiny bird,
Which flew not till to-day,
Against my orders, whom you heard
Forbidding you the prey.

Nor did you kill that you might eat,
And ease a doggish pain,
For him, though chased with furious heat,
You left where he was slain.

Nor was he of the thievish sort,
Or one whom blood allures,
But innocent was all his sport
Whom you have torn for yours.

My dog! what remedy remains,
Since, teach you all I can,
I see you, after all my pains,
So much resemble man!

July 15, 1793.

BEAU'S REPLY.

SIR, when I flew to seize the bird
In spite of your command,
A louder voice than yours I heard,
And harder to withstand.

You cried—Forbear—but in my breast
A mightier cried—Proceed—
'Twas nature, sir, whose strong behest
Impelled me to the deed.

Yet, much as nature I respect,
I ventured once to break
(As you perhaps may recollect)
Her precept for your sake ;

And when your linnet on a day,
Passing his prison door,
Had fluttered all his strength away,
And panting pressed the floor,

Well-knowing him a sacred thing,
Not destined to my tooth,
I only kissed his ruffled wing,
And licked his feathers smooth.

Let my obedience then excuse
My disobedience now,
Nor some reproof yourself refuse
From your aggrieved bow-wow :

If killing birds be such a crime
(Which I can hardly see),
What think you, sir, of killing time
With verse addressed to me !

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

DEAR architect of fine chateaux in air,
Worthier to stand for ever, if they could,
Than any built of stone, or yet of wood,
For back of royal elephant to bear!

O for permission from the skies to share,
Much to my own, though little to thy good,
With thee (not subject to the jealous mood!)
A partnership of literary ware!

But I am bankrupt now; and doomed henceforth
To drudge, in descant dry, on others' lays;
Bards, I acknowledge, of unequalled worth!
But what is commentator's happiest praise?

That he has furnished lights for other eyes,
Which they who need them, use and then despise.

July 29, 1793.

A N S W E R

To Stanzas addressed to Lady Hesketh by Miss Catherine Fanshawe, in
returning a Poem of Mr. Cowper's, lent to her on condition she should
neither show it nor take a copy.

To be remembered thus is fame,
And in the first degree;
And did the few like her the same,
The press might sleep for me.

So Homer, in the memory stored
Of many a Grecian belle,
Was once preserved—a richer hoard,
But never lodged so well.

1798.

ON FLAXMAN'S PENELOPE.

THE suitors sinned, but with a fair excuse,
 Whom all this elegance might well seduce;
 Nor can our censure on the husband fall,
 Who, for a wife so lovely, slew them all.

September 1793.

TO THE SPANISH ADMIRAL COUNT GRAVINA,
 ON HIS TRANSLATING THE AUTHOR'S SONG ON A ROSE
 INTO ITALIAN VERSE.

My rose, Gravina, blooms anew,
 And, steeped not now in rain,
 But in Castalian streams by you,
 Will never fade again.

1793.

TO MARY.

THE twentieth year is well nigh past
 Since first our sky was overcast;
 Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
 I see thee daily weaker grow—
 'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
 For my sake restless heretofore,
 Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,

My Mary!

But well thou play'dst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,

My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,

My Mary

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,

My Mary!

For, could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,

My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet gently pressed, press gently mine,

My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,
That now at every step thou movest
Upheld by two; yet still thou lovest,

My Mary!

And still to love, though pressed with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,

My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know,
 How oft the sadness that I show
 Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
 With much resemblance of the past,
 Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

Autumn of 1793.

MONTES GLACIALES, IN OCEANO GERMANICO NATANTES.

EN, quæ prodigia, ex oris allata remotis,
 Oras adveniunt pavefacta per æquora nostras!
 Non equidem priscæ sæclum rediisse videtur
 Pyrrhæ, cum Proteus pecus altos visere montes
 Et sylvas, egit. Sed tempora vix leviora
 Adsunt, evulsi quando radicitus alti
 In mare descendunt montes, fluctusque pererrant.
 Quid verò hoc monstri est magis et mirabile visu?
 Splendentes video, ceu pulchro ex ære vel auro
 Conflatos, rutilisque accinctos undique gemmis,
 Baccæ cæruleâ, et flammas imitante pyropo.
 Ex oriente adsunt, ubi gazas optima tellus
 Parturit omnigenas, quibus æva per omnia sumptu
 Ingenti finxere sibi diademata reges?
 Vix hoc crediderim. Non fallunt talia acutos
 Mercatorum oculos: prius et quàm littora Gangis
 Liquissent, avidis gratissima præda fuissent.
 Ortos unde putemus? An illos Ves'vius atrox
 Protulit, ignivomisve ejecit faucibus Ætna?
 Luce micant propriâ, Phœbive, per aëra purum
 Nunc stimulantis equos, argentea tela retorquent!
 Phœbi luce micant. Ventis et fluctibus altis
 Appulsi, et rapidis subter currentibus undis,

Tandem non fallunt oculos. Capita alta videre est
 Multâ onerata nive et canis conspersa pruinis.
 Cætera sunt glacies. Procul hinc, ubi Bruma ferè omnes
 Contristat menses, portenta hæc horrida nobis
 Illa strui voluit. Quoties de culmine summo.
 Clivorum fuerunt in littora prona, solutæ
 Sole, nives, propero tendentes in mare cursu,
 Illa gelu fixit. Paulatim attollere sese
 Mirum cœpit opus; glacieque ab origine rerum
 In glaciem aggestâ sublimes vertice tandem
 Æquavit montes, non crescere nescia moles.
 Sic immensa diu stetit, æternumque stetisset
 Congeries, hominum neque vi neque mobilis arte,
 Littora ni tandem declivia deseruisset,
 Pondere victa suo. Dilabitur. Omnia circum
 Antra et saxa gemunt, subito concussa fragore,
 Dum ruit in pelagum, tanquam studiosa natandi,
 Ingens tota strues. Sic Delos dicitur olim,
 Insula, in Ægæo fluitâsse erratica ponto.
 Sed non ex glacie Delos; neque torpida Delum
 Bruma inter rupes genuit nudum sterilemque.
 Sed vestita herbis erat illa, ornataque nunquam
 Deciduâ lauro; et Delum dilexit Apollo.
 At vos, erroneos horrendi, et caligine digni
 Cimmeriâ, Deus idem odit. Natalia vestra,
 Nubibus involvens frontem, non ille tueri
 Sustinuit. Patrium vos ergo requirite cælum!
 Ite! Redite! Timete moras; ne lenitè austro
 Spirante, et nitidas Phœbo jaculante sagittas
 Hostili vobis, pereatis gurgite misti!

March 11, 1790.

ON THE ICE ISLANDS, SEEN FLOATING IN THE
GERMAN OCEAN.

WHAT portents, from what distant region ride,
Unseen till now in ours, the astonished tide !
In ages past, old Proteus, with his droves
Of sea-calves, sought the mountains and the groves,
But now, descending whence of late they stood,
Themselves the mountains seem to rove the flood.
Dire times were they, full charged with human woes ;
And these, scarce less calamitous than those.
What view we now ? More wondrous still ! Behold !
Like burnished brass they shine, or beaten gold ;
And all around the pearl's pure splendour show,
And all around the ruby's fiery glow.
Come they from India, where the burning earth,
All bounteous, gives her richest treasures birth ;
And where the costly gems, that beam around
The brows of mightiest potentates, are found ?
No. Never such a countless dazzling store
Had left unseen the Ganges' peopled shore.
Rapacious hands, and ever watchful eyes,
Should sooner far have marked and seized the prize.
Whence sprang they, then ? Ejected have they come
From Vesuvius', or from Etna's burning womb ?
Thus shine they self-illumed, or but display
The borrowed splendours of a cloudless day !
With borrowed beams they shine. The gales that breathe
Now landward, and the current's force beneath,
Have borne them nearer : and the nearer sight,
Advantaged more, contemplates them aright.
Their lofty summits crested high they show,
With mingled sleet, and long-incumbent snow.
The rest is ice. Far hence, where, most severe,
Bleak winter well-nigh saddens all the year,

Their infant growth began. He bade arise
Their uncouth forms, portentous in our eyes.
Oft as dissolved by transient suns, the snow
Left the tall cliff, to join the flood below ;
He caught, and curdled with a freezing blast
The current, ere it reached the boundless waste.
By slow degrees uprose the wondrous pile,
And long successive ages rolled the while ;
Till, ceaseless in its growth, it claimed to stand
Tall as its rival mountains on the land.
Thus stood, and, unremovable by skill
Or force of man, had stood the structure still,
But that, though firmly fixed, supplanted yet
By pressure of its own enormous weight,
It left the shelving beach, and, with a sound
That shook the bellowing waves and rocks around,
Self-launched, and swiftly, to the briny wave,
As if instinct with strong desire to lave,
Down went the ponderous mass. So bards of old
How Delos swam the *Ægean* deep have told.
But not of ice was Delos. Delos bore
Herb, fruit, and flower. She, crowned with laurel, wore,
E'en under wintry skies, a summer smile ;
And Delos was Apollo's favourite isle.
But, horrid wanderers of the deep, to you
He deems Simmerian darkness only due.
Your hated birth he deigned not to survey,
But, scornful, turned his glorious eyes away.
Hence, seek you home, nor longer rashly dare
The darts of Phœbus, and a softer air ;
Lest ye regret, too late, your native coast,
In no congenial gulf for ever lost !

March 19, 1799.

THE CASTAWAY.

OBSCUREST night involved the sky,
The Atlantic billows roared,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Washed headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast
With warmer wishes sent.
He loved them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay ;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away :
But waged with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted ; nor his friends had failed
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevailed,
That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford ;
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delayed not to bestow :
But he, they knew, nor ship nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seemed, could he
 Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
 Alone could rescue them :
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
 In ocean, self-upheld ;
And so long he, with unspent power,
 His destiny repelled :
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried—" Adieu !"

At length, his transient respite past,
 His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast,
 Could catch the sound no more :
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him ; but the page
 Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
 Is wet with Anson's tear :
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
 Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
 A more enduring date :
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
 No light propitious shone ;

When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished, each alone ;
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

March 20, 1799.

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

DEAR President, whose art sublime
Gives perpetuity to time,
And bids transactions of a day,
That fleeting hours would waft away,
To dark futurity survive,
And in unfading beauty live—
You cannot with a grace decline
A special mandate of the Nine—
Yourself, whatever task you choose,
So much indebted to the Muse.

Thus say the sisterhood: We come—
Fix well your pallet on your thumb,
Prepare the pencil and the tints—
We come to furnish you with hints.

French disappointment, British glory,
Must be the subject of the story.
First strike a curve, a graceful bow,
Then slope it to a point below ;
Your outline easy, airy, light,
Filled up, becomes a paper kite.
Let independence, sanguine, horrid,
Blaze like a meteor in the forehead:
Beneath (but lay aside your graces)
Draw six-and-twenty rueful faces,
Each with a staring, steadfast eye,
Fixed on his great and good ally.
France flies the kite—'tis on the wing—
Britannia's lightning cuts the string.

The wind that raised it, ere it ceases,
Just rends it into thirteen pieces,
Takes charge of every fluttering sheet,
And lays them all at George's feet.

Iberia, trembling from afar,
Renounces the confederate war.
Her efforts and her arts o'ercome,
France calls her shattered navies home :
Repenting Holland learns to mourn
The sacred treaties she has torn;
Astonishment and awe profound
Are stamped upon the nations round;
Without one friend, above all foes,
Britannia gives the world repose.

ON THE AUTHOR OF LETTERS ON LITERATURE.*

THE genius of the Augustan age
His head among Rome's ruins reared,
And bursting with heroic rage,
When literary Heron appeared.

Thou hast, he cried, like him of old
Who set the Ephesian dome on fire,
By being scandalously bold,
Attained the mark of thy desire.

And for traducing Virgil's name,
Shalt share his merited reward—
A perpetuity of fame,
That rots, and stinks, and is abhorred.

* Nominally by Robert Heron, Esq., but supposed to have been written by John Pinkerton. 8vo. 1785.

STANZAS

ON THE LATE INDECENT LIBERTIES TAKEN WITH THE
REMAINS OF MILTON.* ANNO 1790.

ME too, perchance, in future days,
The sculptured stone shall show,
With Paphian myrtle or with bays
Parnassian on my brow.

"But I, or ere that season come,
Escaped from every care,
Shall reach my refuge in the tomb
And sleep securely there."†

So sang, in Roman tone and style,
The youthful bard, ere long
Ordained to grace his native isle
With her sublimest song.

Who then but must conceive disdain,
Hearing the deed unblest
Of wretches who have dared profane
His dread sepulchral rest?

Ill fare the hands that heaved the stones
Where Milton's ashes lay,

* The bones of Milton, who lies buried in Cripplegate church, were disinterred: a pamphlet by Le Neve was published at the time, giving an account of what appeared on opening his coffin.

† Forsitan et nostros ducat de marmore vultus
Nectens aut Paphia myrti aut Parnasside lauri
Fronde comas—At ego secura pace quiescam.

Milton in Manso.

‡ Cowper, no doubt, had in his memory the lines said to have been written by Shakespeare on his tomb:—

"Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust inclosed here,
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones "

That trembled not to grasp the bone
And steal his dust away!

O ill-requited bard! neglect
Thy living worth repaid,
And blind idolatrous respect
As much affronts thee dead.

August 1790.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 22, 1793

If reading verse be your delight,
'Tis mine as much, or more, to write;
But what we would, so weak is man,
Lies oft remote from what we can.
For instance, at this very time
I feel a wish by cheerful rhyme
To soothe my friend, and, had I power,
To cheat him of an anxious hour;
Not meaning (for I must confess,
It were but folly to suppress)
His pleasure, or his good alone,
But squinting partly at my own.
But though the sun is flaming high
In the centre of yon arch, the sky,
And he had once (and who but he?)
The name for setting genius free;
Yet whether poets of past days
Yielded him undeserved praise,
And he by no uncommon lot
Was famed for virtues he had not;
Or whether, which is like enough,
His highness may have taken huff,
So seldom sought with invocation,
Since it has been the reigning fashion
To disregard his inspiration,

I seem no brighter in my wits,
For all the radiance he emits,
Than if I saw, through midnight vapour,
The glimmering of a farthing taper.
Oh for a succedaneum, then,
To accelerate a creeping pen !
Oh for a ready succedaneum,
Quod caput, cerebrum, et cranium
Pondere liberet exoso,
Et morbo jam caliginoso !
'Tis here ; this oval box well filled
With best tobacco, finely milled,
Beats all Anticyra's pretences
To disengage the encumbered senses.
Oh Nymph of transatlantic fame,
Where'er thine haunt, whate'er thy name,
Whether reposing on the side
Of Oroonoko's spacious tide, `
Or listening with delight not small
To Niagara's distant fall,
'Tis thine to cherish and to feed
The pungent nose-refreshing weed,
Which, whether pulverized it gain
A speedy passage to the brain,
Or whether, touched with fire, it rise
In circling eddies to the skies,
Does thought more quicken and refine
Than all the breath of all the Nine—
Forgive the bard, if bard he be,
Who once too wantonly made free,
To touch with a satiric wipe
That symbol of thy power, the pipe ;
So may no blight infest thy plains,
And no unseasonable rains ;
And so may smiling peace once more
Visit America's sad shore ;
And thou, secure from all alarms
Of thundering drums and glittering arms,

Rove unconfined beneath the shade
Thy wide expanded leaves have made :
So may thy votaries increase,
And fumigation never cease.
May Newton, with renewed delights,
Perform thine odoriferous rites,
While clouds of incense half divine
Involve thy disappearing shrine ;
And so may smoke-inhaling Bull
Be always filling, never full.

EPITAPH ON MRS. M. HIGGING, OF WESTON.

LAURELS may flourish round the conqueror's tomb,
But happiest they who win the world to come ;
Believers have a silent field to fight,
And their exploits are veiled from human sight.
They in some nook, where little known they dwell,
Kneel, pray in faith, and rout the hosts of hell ;
Eternal triumphs crown their toils divine,
And all those triumphs, Mary, now are thine.

1791.

A RIDDLE.

I AM just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told.
I am lawful, unlawful—a duty, a fault,
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought ;
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yielded with pleasure when taken by force.

ANSWER.

FROM THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, VOL. LXXVI. P. 1224.

A RIDDLE by Cowper
 Made me swear like a trooper;
 But my anger, alas! was in vain;
 For, remembering the bliss
 Of beauty's soft kiss,
 I now long for such riddles again.

J. T.

COWPER had sinned with some excuse,
 If, bound in rhyming tethers,
 He had committed this abuse
 Of changing ewes for wethers ; *

But, male for female is a trope,
 Or rather bold misnomer,
 That would have startled even Pope,
 When he translated Homer.

ON THE BENEFIT RECEIVED BY HIS MAJESTY
FROM SEA-BATHING IN THE YEAR 1789.

O SOVEREIGN of an isle renowned
 For undisputed sway,
 Wherever o'er yon gulf profound
 Her navies wing their way,

* I have heard about my wether mutton from various quarters. It was a blunder hardly pardonable in a man who has lived amid fields and meadows grazed by sheep almost these thirty years. I have accordingly satirized myself in two stanzas which I composed last night, while I lay awake, tormented with pain, and well dosed with laudanum. If you find them not very brilliant, therefore, you will know how to account for it—
Letter to Joseph Hill, Esq., dated April 15, 1792,

With juster claim she builds at length
Her empire on the sea,
And well may boast the waves her strength
Which strength restored to thee.

ADDRESSED TO MISS ——— ON READING THE
PRAYER FOR INDIFFERENCE.*

AND dwells there in a female heart,
By bounteous Heaven designed,
The choicest raptures to impart,
To feel the most refined—

Dwells there a wish in such a breast
Its nature to forego,
To smother in ignoble rest
At once both bliss and woe?

Far be the thought, and far the strain,
Which breathes the low desire,
How sweet soe'er the verse complain,
Though Phœbus string the lyre.

Come, then, fair maid (in nature wise)
Who, knowing them, can tell
From generous sympathy what joys
The glowing bosom swell:

In justice to the various powers
Of pleasing, which you share,
Join me, amid your silent hours,
To form the better prayer.

With lenient balm may Oberon hence
To fairy land be driven,

* For Mrs. Greville's Ode, see *Annual Register*, vol. v. p. 202.

With every herb that blunts the sense
Mankind received from heaven.

“ Oh ! if my Sovereign Author please,
Far be it from my fate
To live unblessed, in torpid ease,
And slumber on in state.

“ Each tender tie of life defied
Whence social pleasures spring,
Unmoved with all the world beside,
A solitary thing—”

Some Alpine mountain, wrapt in snow,
Thus braves the whirling blast,
Eternal winter doomed to know,
No genial spring to taste.

In vain warm suns their influence shed,
The zephyrs sport in vain,
He rears unchanged his barren head,
Whilst beauty decks the plain.

What though in scaly armour dressed,
Indifference may repel
The shafts of woe—in such a breast
No joy can ever dwell.

’Tis woven in the world’s great plan,
And fixed by Heaven’s decree,
That all the true delights of man
Should spring from Sympathy.

’Tis nature bids, and whilst the laws
Of nature we retain,
Our self-approving bosom draws
A pleasure from its pain.

Thus grief itself has comforts dear
The sordid never know;
And ecstasy attends the tear
When virtue bids it flow.

For when it streams from that pure source,
No bribes the heart can win,
To check or alter from its course
The luxury within.

Peace to the phlegm of sullen elves,
Who, if from labour eased,
Extend no care beyond themselves,
Unpleasing and unpleased.

Let no low thought suggest the prayer,
Oh! grant, kind Heaven, to me,
Long as I draw ethereal air,
Sweet Sensibility.

Where'er the heavenly nymph is seen,
With lustre-beaming eye,
A train attendant on their queen,
(Her rosy chorus) fly.

The jocund Loves in Hymen's band,
With torches ever bright,
And generous Friendship hand in hand,
With Pity's watery sight.

The gentler Virtues too are joined
In youth immortal warm;
The soft relations, which, combined,
Give life her every charm.

The Arts come smiling in the close,
And lend celestial fire;
The marble breathes, the canvass glows,
The Muses sweep the lyre.

"Still may my melting bosom cleave
To sufferings not my own,
And still the sigh responsive heave
Where'er is heard a groan.

"So Pity shall take Virtue's part,
Her natural ally,
And fashioning my softened heart,
Prepare it for the sky."

This artless vow may Heaven receive,
And you, fond maid, approve :
So may your guiding angel givo
Whate'er you wish or love.

So may the rosy-fingered hours
Lead on the various year,
And every joy, which now is yours,
Extend a larger sphere.

And suns to come, as round they wheel,
Your golden moments bless
With all a tender heart can feel,
Or lively fancy guess.

1762.

FROM A LETTER TO THE REV. MR. NEWTON,

LATE RECTOR OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH.

SAYS the Pipe to the Snuffbox, I can't understand
What the ladies and gentlemen see in your face,
That you are in fashion all over the land,
And I am so much fallen into disgrace.

Do but see what a pretty contemplative air
I give to the company—pray do but note 'em—
You would think that the wise men of Greece were all there,
Or, at least, would suppose them the wise men of Gotham.

My breath is as sweet as the breath of blown roses,
While you are a nuisance where'er you appear;
There is nothing but snivelling and blowing of noses,
Such a noise as turns any man's stomach to hear.

Then lifting his lid in a delicate way,
And opening his mouth with a smile quite engaging,
The Box in reply was heard plainly to say—
What a silly dispute is this we are waging!

If you have a little of merit to claim,
You may thank the sweet-smelling Virginian weed,
And I, if I seem to deserve any blame,
The before-mentioned drug in apology plead.

Thus neither the praise nor the blame is our own,
No room for a sneer, much less a cachinnus,
We are vehicles, not of tobacco alone,
But of anything else they may choose to put in us.

THE FLATTING MILL.

AN ILLUSTRATION.

WHEN a bar of pure silver or ingot of gold
Is sent to be flatted or wrought into length,
It is passed between cylinders often, and rolled
In an engine of utmost mechanical strength.

Thus tortured and squeezed, at last it appears
Like a loose heap of ribbon, a glittering show,
Like music it tinkles and rings in your ears,
And, warmed by the pressure, is all in a glow.

This process achieved, it is doomed to sustain
The thump after thump of a gold-beater's mallet,
And at last is of service in sickness or pain
To cover a pill for a delicate palate.

Alas for the poet! who dares undertake
To urge reformation of national ill—
His head and his heart are both likely to ache
With the double employment of mallet and mill.

If he wish to instruct, he must learn to delight,
Smooth, ductile, and even his fancy must flow,
Must tinkle and glitter like gold to the sight,
And catch in its progress a sensible glow.

After all he must beat it as thin and as fine
As the leaf that enfolds what an invalid swallows;
For truth is unwelcome, however divine,
And unless you adorn it, a nausea follows.

EPITAPH ON A FREE BUT TAME REDBREAST,

A FAVOURITE OF MISS SALLY HURDIS.

THESE are not drowdrops, these are tears,
And tears by Sally shed,
For absent Robin, who she fears,
With too much cause, is dead.

One morn he came not to her hand
As he was wont to come,
And, on her finger perched, to stand
Picking his breakfast-crumbs.

Alarmed, she called him, and perplexed,
She sought him, but in vain—
That day he came not, nor the next,
Nor ever came again.

She therefore raised him here a tomb,
Though where he fell, or how,
None knows, so secret was his doom,
Nor where he moulders now.

Had half a score of coxcombs died
In social Robin's stead,
Poor Sally's tears had soon been dried,
Or haply never shed.

But Bob was neither rudely bold
Nor spiritlessly tame ;
Nor was, like theirs, his bosom cold,
But always in a flame.

March 1792.

SONNET

ADDRESSED TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

HAYLEY—thy tenderness fraternal shown
In our first interview, delightful guest !
To Mary, and me for her dear sake distressed,
Such as it is has made my heart thy own,
Though heedless now of new engagements grown ;
For threescore winters make a wintry breast,
And I had purposed ne'er to go in quest
Of friendship more, except with God alone.
But thou hast won me ; nor is God my foe,
Who, ere this last afflictive scene began,
Sent thee to mitigate the dreadful blow,
My brother, by whose sympathy I know
Thy true deserts infallibly to scan,
Not more to admire the bard than love the man.

June 2, 1792.

AN EPITAPH.

HERE lies one who never drew
Blood himself, yet many slew ;
Gave the gun its aim, and figure
Made in field, yet ne'er pulled trigger.

Armed men have gladly made
 Him their guide, and him obeyed;
 At his signified desire
 Would advance, present, and fire;
 Stout he was, and large of limb,
 Scores have fled at sight of him!
 And to all this fame he rose
 Only following his nose.
 Neptune was he called, not he
 Who controls the boisterous sea,
 But of happier command,
 Neptune of the furrowed land;
 And, your wonder vain to shorten,
 Pointer to Sir John Throckmorton.

1792.

ON RECEIVING HAYLEY'S PICTURE.

IN language warm as could be breathed or penned,
 Thy picture speaks the original my friend,
 Not by those looks that indicate thy mind—
 They only speak thee friend of all mankind;
 Expression here more soothing still I see,
 That friend of all, a partial friend to me.

January 1793.

ON A PLANT OF VIRGIN'S BOWER

DESIGNED TO COVER A GARDEN-SEAT.

THRIVE, gentle plant! and weave a bower
 For Mary and for me,
 And deck with many a splendid flower
 Thy foliage large and free.

Thou cam'st from Eartham, and wilt shade
 (If truly I divine)

Some future day the illustrious head
Of him who made thee mine.

Should Daphne show a jealous frown,
And envy seize the bay,
Affirming none so fit to crown
Such honoured brows as they ;

Thy cause with zeal we shall defend,
And with convincing power ;
For why should not the virgin's friend
Be crowned with virgin's bower !
Spring of 1793.

ON RECEIVING HEYNE'S VIRGIL FROM
MR. HAYLEY.

I SHOULD have deemed it once an effort vain
To sweeten more sweet Maro's matchless strain,
But from that error now behold me free,
Since I received him as a gift from thee.
Oct. 1793.

EPITAPH ON A HARE.

HERE lies, whom hound did no'er pursue,
Nor swifter greyhound follow,
Whose foot no'er tainted morning dew,
Nor ear heard huntsman's halloo ;

Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,
Who, nursed with tender care,
And to domestic bounds confined,
Was still a wild Jack hare.

Though duly from my hand he took
His pittance every night,

He did it with a jealous look,
And, when he could, would bite.

His diet was of wheaten bread,
And milk, and oats, and straw ;
Thistles, or lettuces instead,
With sand to scour his jaw.

On twigs of hawthorn he regaled,
On pippins' russet peel,
And, when his juicy salads failed,
Sliced carrot pleased him well.

A Turkey carpet was his lawn,
Whereon he loved to bound,
To skip and gambol like a fawn,
And swing his rump around.

His frisking was at evening hours,
For then he lost his fear,
But most before approaching showers,
Or when a storm drew near.

Eight years and five round rolling moons
He thus saw steal away,
Dozing out all his idle noons,
And every night at play.

I kept him for his humour's sake,
For he would oft beguile
My heart of thoughts that made it ache,
And force me to a smile.

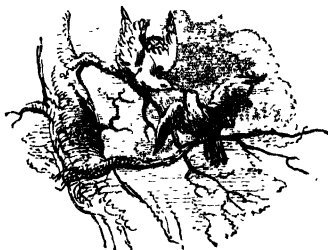
But now beneath his walnut shade
He finds his long last home,
And waits, in snug concealment laid,
Till gentler Puss shall come.

He, still more aged, feels the shocks
From which no care can save,
And, partner once of Tiney's box,
Must soon partake his grave.

EPITAPHIUM ALTERUM.

Hic etiam jacet,
Qui totum novennium vixit,
Puss.

Siste paulisper,
Qui præteriturus es,
Et tecum sic reputa—
Hunc neque canis venaticus,
Nec plumbum missile,
Nec laqueus,
Nec imbres nimii,
Confecêre :
Tamen mortuus est—
Et moriar ego.





TRANSLATIONS.

THE GLOWWORM.

BENEATH the hodge, or near the stream,
A worm is known to stray,
That shows by night a lucid beam,
Which disappears by day.

Disputes have been, and still prevail,
From whence his rays proceed ;
Some give that honour to his tail,
And others to his head.

But this is sure—the hand of might,
That kindles up the skies,
Gives him a modicum of light
Proportioned to his size.

Perhaps indulgent Nature meant,
By such a lamp bestowed,
To bid the traveller, as he went,
Be careful where he trod :

Nor crush a worm, whose useful light
Might serve, however small,
To show a stumbling-stone by night,
And save him from a fall.

Whate'er she meant, this truth divine
Is legible and plain,
'Tis power almighty bids him shine,
Nor bids him shine in vain.

Ye proud and wealthy, let this theme
Teach humbler thoughts to you,
Since such a reptile has its gem,
And boasts its splendour too.

THE JACKDAW.

THERE is a bird who, by his coat,
And by the hoarseness of his note,
Might be supposed a crow;
A great frequenter of the church,
Where, bishoplike, he finds a perch,
And dormitory too.

Above the steeple shines a plate,
That turns and turns, to indicate
From what point blows the weather.
Look up—your brains begin to swim,
'Tis in the clouds—that pleases him,
He chooses it the rather.

Fond of the speculative height,
Thither he wings his airy flight,
And thence securely sees
The bustle and the rareeshow,
That occupy mankind below,
Secure and at his ease.

You think, no doubt, he sits and muses
On future broken bones and bruises,
If he should chance to fall.

No ; not a single thought like that
Employs his philosophic pate,
Or troubles it at all.

He sees that this great roundabout,
The world, with all its motley rout,
Church, army, physic, law,
Its customs and its businesses,
Is no concern at all of his,
And says—what says he?—Caw.

Thrice happy bird ! I too have seen
Much of the vanities of men ;
And, sick of having seen 'em,
Would cheerfully these limbs resign
For such a pair of wings as thine,
And such a head between 'em.

THE PARROT.

In painted plumes superbly dressed,
A native of the gorgeous East,
By many a billow tossed !
Poll gains at length the British shore,
Part of the captain's precious store,
A present to his toast.

Belinda's maids are soon preferred,
To teach him now and then a word,
As Poll can master it ;
But 'tis her own important charge,
To qualify him more at large,
And make him quite a wit.

Sweet Poll ! his doting mistress cries,
Sweet Poll ! the mimic bird replies,
And calls aloud for sack.



She next instructs him in the kiss ;
 'Tis now a little one, like Miss,
 And now a hearty smack.

At first he aims at what he hears ;
 And, listening close with both his ears,
 Just catches at the sound ;
 But soon articulates aloud,
 Much to the amusement of the crowd,
 And stuns the neighbours round.

A querulous old woman's voice
 His humorous talent next employs,
 He scolds, and gives the lie.
 And now he sings, and now is sick,
 Here, Sally, Susan, come, come quick,
 Poor Poll is like to die !

Belinda and her bird ! 'tis rare
To meet with such a well-matched pair,
The language and the tone,
Each character in every part
Sustained with so much grace and art,
And both in unison.

When children first begin to spell,
And stammer out a syllable,
We think them tedious creatures ;
But difficulties soon abate,
When birds are to be taught to prate,
And women are the teachers.

THE CRICKET.

LITTLE inmate, full of mirth,
Chirping on my kitchen hearth,
Whereso'er be thine abode,
Always harbinger of good,
Pay me for thy warm retreat
With a song more soft and sweet :
In return thou shalt receive
Such a strain as I can give.

Thus thy praise shall be expressed,
Inoffensive, welcome guest !
While the rat is on the scout,
And the mouse with curious snout,
With what vermin else infest
Every dish, and spoil the best ;
Frisking thus before the fire,
Thou hast all thine heart's desire.

Though in voice and shape they be
Formed as if akin to thee,

Thou surpassest, happier far,
Happiest grasshoppers that are ;
Theirs is but a summer's song,
Thine endures the winter long,
Unimpaired, and shrill, and clear,
Melody throughout the year.

Neither night nor dawn of day
Puts a period to thy play :
Sing, then—and extend thy span
Far beyond the date of man.
Wretched man, whose years are spent
In repining discontent,
Lives not, aged though he be,
Half a span, compared with thee.

RECIPROCAL KINDNESS THE PRIMARY LAW OF NATURE.

ANDROCLES, from his injured lord, in dread
Of instant death, to Libya's desert fled.
Tired with his toilsome flight, and parched with heat,
He spied at length a cavern's cool retreat ;
But scarce had given to rest his weary frame,
When, hugest of his kind, a lion came :
He roared approaching : but the savage din
To plaintive murmurs changed—arrived within,
And with expressive looks, his lifted paw
Presenting, aid implored from whom he saw.
The fugitive, through terror at a stand,
Dared not awhile afford his trembling hand ;
But bolder grown, at length inherent found
A pointed thorn, and drew it from the wound.
The cure was wrought ; he wiped the sanious blood,
And, firm and free from pain, the lion stood.
Again he seeks the wilds, and day by day
Regales his inmate with the parted prey.

Nor he disdains the dole, though unprepared,
 Spread on the ground, and with a lion shared,
 But thus to live—still lost—sequestered still—
 Scarce seemed his lord's revenge a heavier ill.
 Home! native home! O might he but repair!
 He must—he will, though death attends him there.
 He goes, and, doomed to perish on the sands
 Of the full theatre, unpitied stands:
 When lo! the selfsame lion from his cage
 Flies to devour him, famished into rage.
 He flies, but, viewing in his purposed prey
 The man, his healer, pauses on his way,
 And, softened by remembrance into sweet
 And kind composure, crouches at his feet.
 Mute with astonishment, the assembly gaze:
 But why, ye Romans! Whence your mute amaze?
 All this is natural: nature bade him rend
 An enemy; she bids him spare a friend.

THE THRACIAN.

THRACIAN parents, at his birth,
 Mourn their babe with many a tear,
 But with undissembled mirth
 Place him breathless on his bier

Greece and Rome, with equal scorn,
 "O the savages!" exclaim,
 "Whether they rejoice or mourn,
 Well entitled to the name!"

But the cause of this concern,
 And this pleasure, would they trace,
 Even they might somewhat learn
 From the savages of Thrace.

A MANUAL,

**MORE ANCIENT THAN THE ART OF PRINTING, AND NOT TO
BE FOUND IN ANY CATALOGUE.**

THERE is a book, which we may call
(Its excellence is such)
Alone a library, though small :
The ladies thumb it much.

Words none, things numerous it contains :
And things with words compared,
Who needs be told, that has his brains,
Which merits most regard !

Ofttimes its leaves of scarlet hue
A golden edging boast ;
And opened, it displays to view
Twelve pages at the most.

Nor name nor title, stamped behind,
Adorns its outer part ;
But all within 'tis richly lined,
A magazine of art.

The whitest hands that secret hoard
Oft visit : and the fair
Prêserve it in their bosoms stored,
As with a miser's care.

Thence implements of every size,
And formed for various use
(They need but to consult their eyes),
They readily produce.

The largest and the longest kind
Possess the foremost page,

A sort most needed by the blind,
Or nearly such from age.

The full charged leaf, which next ensues,
Presents in bright array
The smaller sort, which matrons use,
Not quite so blind as they.

The third, the fourth, the fifth supply
What their occasions ask,
Who, with a more discerning eye,
Perform a nicer task.

But still, with regular decrease,
From size to size they fall,
In every leaf grow less and less;
The last are least of all.

O! what a fund of genius, pent
In narrow space, is here!
This volume's method and intent
How luminous and clear.

It leaves no reader at a loss,
Or posed, whoever reads:
No commentator's tedious gloss,
Nor even index needs.

Search Bodley's many thousands o'er!
No book is treasured there,
Nor yet in Granta's numerous store,
That may with this compare.

No!—rival none in either host
Of this was ever seen,
Or, that contents could justly boast,
So brilliant and so keen.

AN ENIGMA.

A NEEDLE, small as small can be,
In bulk and use surpasses me,
Nor is my purchase dear;
For little, and almost for nought,
As many of my kind are bought
As days are in the year.

Yet though but little use we boast,
And are procured at little cost,
The labour is not light;
Nor few artificers it asks,
All skilful in their several tasks,
To fashion us aright.

One fuses metal o'er the fire,
A second draws it into wire,
The shears another plies,
Who clips in length the brazen thread
For him who, chafing every shred,
Gives all an equal size.

A fifth prepares, exact and round,
The knob with which it must be crowned;
His follower makes it fast:
And with his mallet and his file,
To shape the point, employs awhile
The seventh and the last.

Now, therefore, *Cædipus*! declare
What creature, wonderful, and rare,
A process that obtains
Its purpose, with so much ado,
At last produces!—tell me true,
And take me for your pains!

SPARROWS SELF-DOMESTICATED IN TRINITY
COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

NONE ever shared the social feast,
Or as an inmate or a guest,
Beneath the celebrated dome
Where once Sir Isaac had his home,
Who saw not (and with some delight
Perhaps he viewed the novel sight)
How numerous, at the tables there,
The sparrows beg their daily fare.
For there, in every nook and cell
Where such a family may dwell,
Sure as the vernal season comes,
Their nest they weave in hope of crumbs,
Which kindly given, may serve with food
Convenient their unfeathered brood :
And oft as with its summons clear
The warning bell salutes their ear,
Sagacious listeners to the sound,
They flock from all the fields around,
To reach the hospitable hall,
None more attentive to the call.
Arrived the pensionary band,
Hopping and chirping, close at hand,
Solicit what they soon receive,
The sprinkled, plenteous donative.
Thus is a multitude, though large,
Supported at a trivial charge :
A single doit would overpay
The expenditure of every day ;
And who can grudge so small a grace
To suppliants, natives of the place ?

FAMILIARITY DANGEROUS.

As in her ancient mistress' lap
The youthful tabby lay,
They gave each other many a tap,
Alike disposed to play.

But strife ensues. Puss waxes warm,
And with protruded claws
Ploughs all the length of Lydia's arm,
Mere wantonness the cause.

At once, resentful of the deed,
She shakes her to the ground,
With many a threat that she shall bleed
With still a deeper wound.

But, Lydia, bid thy fury rest :
It was a venial stroke :
For she that will with kittens jest
Should bear a kitten's joke.

INVITATION TO THE REDBREAST.

SWEET bird, whom the winter constrains—
And seldom another it can
To seek a retreat while he reigns
In the well-sheltered dwellings of man,
Who never can seem to intrude,
Though in all places equally free,
Come, oft as the season is rude,
Thou art sure to be welcome to me.

At sight of the first feeble ray
That pierces the clouds of the east,

To inveigle thee every day,
 My windows shall show thee a feast.
 For, taught by experience, I know
 Thee mindful of benefit long;
 And that, thankful for all I bestow,
 Thou wilt pay me with many a song.

Then, soon as the swell of the buds
 Bespeaks the renewal of spring,
 Fly hence, if thou wilt, to the woods,
 Or where it shall please thee to sing:
 And shouldst thou, compelled by a frost,
 Come again to my window or door,
 Doubt not an affectionate host,
 Only pay as thou paid'st me before.

Thus music must needs be confessed
 To flow from a fountain above;
 Else how should it work in the breast
 Unchangeable friendship and love?
 And who on the globe can be found,
 Save your generation and ours,
 That can be delighted by sound,
 Or boasts any musical powers?

STRADA'S NIGHTINGALE.

THE shepherd touched his reed; sweet Philomel
 Essayed, and oft essayed to catch the strain,
 And treasuring, as on her ear they fell,
 The numbers, echoed note for note again.

The peevish youth, who ne'er had found before
 A rival of his skill, indignant heard,
 And soon (for various was his tuneful store)
 In loftier tones defied the simple bird.

She dared the task, and, rising as he rose,
With all the force that passion gives inspired,
Returned the sounds awhile, but in the close
Exhausted fell, and at his feet expired.

Thus strength, not skill, prevailed. O fatal strife,
By thee, poor songstress, playfully begun ;
And, O sad victory, which cost thy life,
And he may wish that he had never won !

ODE ON THE DEATH OF A LADY,
WHO LIVED ONE HUNDRED YEARS, AND DIED ON HER
BIRTHDAY, 1728.

ANCIENT dame, how wide and vast
To a race-like ours appears,
Rounded to an orb at last,
All thy multitude of years !

We, the herd of human kind,
Frailer and of feebler powers ;
We, to narrow bounds confined,
Soon exhaust the sum of ours.

Death's delicious banquet—we
Perish even from the womb,
Swifter than a shadow flee,
Nourished but to feed the tomb.

Seeds of merciless disease
Lurk in all that we enjoy ;
Some that waste us by degrees,
Some that suddenly destroy.

And, if life o'erleap the bourn
Common to the sons of men,

What remains, but that we mourn,
 Dream, and dote, and drivel then !

Fast as moons can wax and wane,
 Sorrow comes ; and while we groan,
 Pant with anguish, and complain,
 Half our years are fled and gone.

If a few (to few 'tis given),
 Lingering on this earthly stage,
 Creep and halt, with steps uneven,
 To the period of an age.

Wherefore live they, but to see
 Cunning, arrogance, and force,
 Sights lamented much by thee,
 Holding their accustomed course ?

Oft was seen, in ages past,
 All that we with wonder view ;
 Often shall be to the last ;
 Earth produces nothing new.

Thee we gratulate, content
 Should propitious Heaven design
 Life for us as calmly spent,
 Though but half the length of thine.

THE CAUSE WON.

Two neighbours furiously dispute ;
 A field—the subject of the suit.
 Trivial the spot, yet such the rage
 With which the combatants engage,
 'Twere hard to tell who covets most
 The prize—at whatsoever cost.
 The pleadings swell. Words still suffice :
 No single word but has its price.

No term but yields some fair pretence
For novel and increased expense.

Defendant thus becomes a name,
Which he that bore it may disclaim,
Since both, in one description blended,
Are plaintiffs—when the suit is ended.

THE SILKWORM.

THE beams of April, ere it goes,
A worm, scarce visible, disclose ;
All winter long content to dwell
The tenant of his native shell.
The same prolific season gives
The sustenance by which he lives,
The mulberry leaf, a simple store,
That serves him—till he needs no more !
For, his dimensions once complete,
Thenceforth none ever sees him eat ;
Though till his growing time be past
Scarce ever is he seen to fast.
That hour arrived, his work begins,
He spins, and weaves, and weaves and spins ;
Till circle upon circle wound
Careless around him and around,
Conceals him with a veil, though slight,
Impervious to the keenest sight.
Thus self-inclosed as in a cask,
At length he finishes his task ;
And though a worm when he was lost,
Or caterpillar at the most,
When next we see him, wings he wears,
And in papilio pomp appears :
Becomes oviparous ; supplies
With future worms and future flies
The next ensuing year— and dies !

Well were it for the world if all
 Who creep about this earthly ball,
 Though shorter lived than most he be,
 Were useful in their kind as he.

NO SORROW PECULIAR TO THE SUFFERER.

THE lover, in melodious verses,
 His singular distress rehearses,
 Still closing with a rueful cry,
 "Was ever such a wretch as I!"
 Yes! thousands have endured before
 All thy distress; some, haply, more.
 Unnumbered Corydons complain,
 And Strephons, of the like disdain;
 And if thy Chloe be of steel,
 Too deaf to hear, too hard to feel;
 Not her alone that censure fits,
 Nor thou alone hast lost thy wits.

THE SNAIL.

To grass, or leaf, or fruit, or wall,
 The snail sticks close, nor fears to fall,
 As if he grew there, house and all
 Together.

Within that house secure he hides,
 When danger imminent betides
 Or storm, or other harm besides
 Of weather.

Give but his horns the slightest touch,
 His self-collecting power is such,
 He shrinks into his house with much
 Displeasure.

Where'er he dwells, he dwells alone,
Except himself, has chattels none,
Well satisfied to be his own
Whole treasure

Thus, hermit-like, his life he leads,
Nor partner of his banquet needs,
And if he meets one, only feeds
The faster

Who seeks him must be worse than blind
(He and his house are so combined),
If, finding it, he fails to find
Its master.





THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF

THE TREATMENT OF HIS HARES,

WAS INSERTED BY COWPER IN THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE.

IN the year 1774, being much indisposed both in mind and body, incapable of diverting myself either with company or books, and yet in a condition that made some diversion necessary, I was glad of anything that would engage my attention without fatiguing it. The children of a neighbour of mine had a leveret given them for a plaything; it was at that time about three months old. Understanding better how to tease the poor creature than to feed it, and soon becoming weary of their charge, they readily consented that their father, who saw it pining and growing leaner every day, should offer it to my acceptance. I was willing enough to take the prisoner under my protection, perceiving that, in the management of such an animal, and in the attempt to tame it, I should find just that sort of employment which my case required. It was soon known among the neighbours that I was pleased with the present, and the consequence was, that in a short time I had as many leverets offered to me as would have stocked a paddock. I undertook the care of three, which it is necessary that I should here distinguish by the names I gave them—Puss, Tiney, and Bess. Notwithstanding the two feminine appellatives, I must inform you that they were all males. Immediately commencing carpenter, I built them houses to sleep in; each had a separate apartment, so contrived that their ordure would pass through the bottom of it; an earthen pan placed under each received whatsoever fell, which being duly emptied and washed, they were thus kept perfectly sweet and clean. In the daytime they had the range of a hall, and at night retired each to his own bed, never intruding into that of another.

Puss grew presently familiar, would leap into my lap, raise himself upon his hinder feet, and bite the hair from my temples. He would suffer me to take him up, and to carry him about in

My arms, and has more than once fallen fast asleep upon my knee. He was ill three days, during which time I nursed him, kept him apart from his fellows, that they might not molest him (for, like many other wild animals, they persecute one of their own species that is sick), and by constant care, and trying him with a variety of herbs, restored him to perfect health. No creature could be more grateful than my patient after his recovery; a sentiment which he most significantly expressed by licking my hand, first the back of it, then the palm, then every finger separately, then between all the fingers, as if anxious to leave no part of it unsaluted; a ceremony which he never performed but once again upon a similar occasion. Finding him extremely tractable, I made it my custom to carry him always after breakfast into the garden, where he hid himself generally under the leaves of a cucumber vine, sleeping, or chewing the cud till evening; in the leaves also of that vine he found a favourite repast. I had not long habituated him to this taste of liberty, before he began to be impatient for the return of the time when he might enjoy it. He would invite me to the garden by drumming upon my knee, and by a look of such expression as it was not possible to misinterpret. If this rhetoric did not immediately succeed, he would take the skirt of my coat between his teeth, and pull it with all his force. Thus Puss might be said to be perfectly tamed, the shyness of his nature was done away, and on the whole it was visible, by many symptoms which I have not room to enumerate, that he was happier in human society than when shut up with his natural companions.

Not so Tiney; upon him the kindest treatment had not the least effect. He too was sick, and in his sickness had an equal share of my attention; but if, after his recovery, I took the liberty to stroke him, he would grunt, strike with his fore-feet, spring forward, and bite. He was, however, very entertaining in his way; even his surliness was matter of mirth, and in his play he preserved such an air of gravity, and performed his feats with such a solemnity of manner, that in him too I had an agreeable companion.

Bess, who died soon after he was full grown, and whose death was occasioned by his being turned into his box, which had been washed, while it was yet damp, was a hare of great humour and drollery. Puss was tamed by gentle usage; Tiney was not to be tamed at all; and Bess had a courage and confidence that made him tame from the beginning. I always admitted them

into the parlour after supper, when, the carpet affording their feet a firm hold, they would frisk, and bound, and play a thousand gambols, in which Bess, being remarkably strong and fearless, was always superior to the rest, and proved himself the Vestris of the party. One evening the cat, being in the room, had the hardiness to pat Bess upon the cheek, an indignity which he resented by drumming upon her back with such violence, that the cat was happy to escape from under his paws and hide herself.

I describe these animals as having each a character of his own. Such they were, in fact, and their countenances were so expressive of that character, that, when I looked only on the face of either, I immediately knew which it was. It is said that a shepherd, however numerous his flock, soon becomes so familiar with their features, that he can, by that indication only, distinguish each from all the rest; and yet, to a common observer, the difference is hardly perceptible. I doubt not that the same discrimination in the cast of countenances would be discoverable in hares, and am persuaded that among a thousand of them no two could be found exactly similar, a circumstance little suspected by those who have not had opportunity to observe it. These creatures have a singular sagacity in discovering the minutest alteration that is made in the place to which they are accustomed, and instantly apply their nose to the examination of a new object. A small hole being burnt in the carpet, it was mended with a patch, and that patch in a moment underwent the strictest scrutiny. They seem, too, to be very much directed by the smell in the choice of their favourites; to some persons, though they ~~see~~ ^{smell} them daily, they could never be reconciled, and would even scream when they attempted to touch them; but a miller coming in, engaged their affections at once; his powdered coat had charms that were irresistible. It is no wonder that my intimate acquaintance with these specimens of the kind, has taught me to hold the sportsman's amusement in abhorrence. He little knows what amiable creatures he persecutes, of what gratitude they are capable, how cheerful they are in their spirits, what enjoyment they have of life, and that, impressed as they seem with a peculiar dread of man, it is only because man gives them peculiar cause for it.

That I may not be tedious, I will just give a short summary of those articles of diet that suit them best.

I take it to be a general opinion that they graze, but it is an erroneous one; at least grass is not their staple. They seem

her to use it medicinally, soon quitting it for leaves of almost any kind. Sowthistle, dandelion, and lettuce, are their favourite vegetables, especially the last. I discovered, by accident, that fine white sand is in great estimation with them—I suppose as digestive. It happened that I was cleaning a bird-cage when the hares were with me. I placed a pot filled with such sand upon the floor, which, being at once directed to by a strong instinct, they devoured voraciously. Since that time I have generally taken care to see them well supplied with it. They account green corn a delicacy, both blade and stalk, but the ear they seldom eat. Straw of any kind, especially wheat-straw, is another of their dainties. They will feed greedily upon oats, and, if furnished with clean straw, never want them: it serves also for a bed, and, if shaken up daily, will be kept sweet for a considerable time. They do not, indeed, require aromatic herbs, but will eat a small quantity of them with great relish, and are particularly fond of the plant called musk. They seem to resemble sheep in this, that, if their pasture be too succulent, they are very subject to the rot; to prevent which, I always made bread their principal nourishment, and, filling a pan with it, cut into small squares, placed it every evening in their chambers—for they feed only at evening and in the night. During the winter, when vegetables were not to be got, I mingled this mess of bread with shreds of carrot, adding to it the rind of apples, cut extremely thin; for though they are fond of the paring, the apple itself disgusts them. These, however, not being a sufficient substitute for the juice of summer herbs, they must at this time be supplied with water; but so placed that they cannot upset it into their beds. I must not omit, that occasionally they are much pleased with twigs of hawthorn, and of the common brier, eating even the very wood when it is of considerable thickness.

Bess, I have said, died young. Tiney lived to be nine years old, and died at last, I have reason to think, of some hurt in his loins by a fall. Puss is still living, and has just completed his tenth year, discovering no signs of decay, nor even of age, except that he is grown more discreet and less frolicsome than he was. I cannot conclude without observing, that I have lately introduced a dog to his acquaintance—a spaniel that had never seen a hare, to a hare that had never seen a spaniel. I did it with great caution, but there was no real need of it. Puss discovered no token of fear, nor Marquis the least symptom of hostility. There is, therefore, it should seem, no natural anti-

pathy between dog and hare; but the pursuit of the one occasions the flight of the other, and the dog pursues because he is trained to it. They eat bread at the same time out of the same hand, and are in all respects sociable and friendly.

I should not do complete justice to my subject, did I not add, that they have no ill scent belonging to them, that they are indefatigably nice in keeping themselves clean, for which purpose nature has furnished them with a brush under each foot; and that they are never infested by any vermin.

May 28, 1784.

MEMORANDUM FOUND AMONG MR. COWPER'S PAPERS.

Tuesday March 9th

This day died poor Puss, aged eleven years eleven months. He died between twelve and one at noon, of mere old age, and apparently without pain.



